

# ADIVASI

Vol. XXXVI, Nos. 1 & 2  
June & December, 1996.

The Journal of the Scheduled Castes &  
Scheduled Tribes Research & Training  
Institute, Bhubaneswar.

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# ADIVASI

Vol. XXXVI

Nos. 1 & 2

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Published by the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes  
Research and Training Institute, Government of Orissa,  
Bhubaneswar-751003

# ADIVASI

It is published twice a year in June and December by the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled tribes research & training Institute, C. R. P. F. Square, Unit-VIII, Bhubaneswar-751003. It includes articles and research findings in various Social Sciences, Development Strategies and other related matters emphasising the problems of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes communities. It also publishes Book Review as and when referred to.

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In Essays on crop plant evolution.

Edited by Sir Joseph Hutchinson, pp. 50—69, Cambridge :  
Cambridge University Press.

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### Inland :

Single Issue—Rs. 15-00 (Rupees fifteen only)

Double Issue—Rs. 30-00 (Rupees thirty only)

(Annual/Combined)

### Abroad :

Single Issue —\$1 (One U. S. Dollar only)

Double Issue—\$2 (Two U. S. Dollars only)

(Annual/Combined)

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## Editorial.....

Contained in the volume are seven papers representing diverse themes with the unique purpose of depicting various aspects of society and culture of the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste communities of Orissa State in the contextual frame of persistence and change. The social identity of the communities is defined and redefined from time to time and it is necessary to document consistently the socio-cultural aspects of the people.

The paper on "Understanding Sarna Dharam" seeks to highlight salient features of the Sarna Dharam as observed and interpreted by various scholars. Keeping in view the sociological and psychological theories of religion in pre-literate societies, the significant characteristics of Indian tribal religious beliefs, processes of syncretism, assimilation, fusion, reaction and reinterpretation, the matter has been presented. Further, attempt has been made to understand the Sarna Dharam vis-a-vis the Hinduism. If at all it is construed as a social movement, the analytical frame is purely sociological. The revivalism and the redefinition of the cult of village deity is the central theme of the Sarna Dharam as it appears synchronically in the ethnographic arena.

The paper on "Totemic Groups, Title Groups and other Social Groups among the Gadaba" humbly attempts to discuss, circumscribe and differentiate the varieties of groups which constitute the bedrock level of their social structure and more specifically their kinship structure. The ethnographic value of the paper is that the empirical data discussed therein could also be considered as the starting point of further structural analysis. The paper is data-based and analytical.

The paper on "The Pana of Phulbani District : A Socio-Economic Profile" discusses the Pana as a Scheduled Caste Community in Phulbani District based on data collected from two sample villages. The paper briefly discusses the demographic feature, social life including lifestyle rituals and economic life. One of the striking features of the paper is that it shows the symbiotic relationship between the Pana and the Kandha, a major tribal community of the area. It is significant to note that the Pana in the tribal context do not suffer from the stigma of untouchability and social discrimination.

The paper on "The Traditions and Customs of the Dongria Kandha of Orissa" discusses the traditions and customs of the people in their socio-cultural nexus. It touches all significant aspects of their society and culture in a nutshell. The paper finally attempts to show the change in their life-style due to planned development intervention.

The paper on "Social Control and traditional Socio-Political System of the Lanjia Saora of Koraput" discusses the conceptual frame of the mechanism of social control. The paper is both descriptive and analytical. It tries to unravel the riddles of socio-political arrangements of a



primitive tribal group of the State. It also emphasises that the supernatural fear acts as a powerful mechanism of social control and accordingly the conduct of the people is moulded. The operationalisation of the mechanism of social control within a given institutional arrangement has been brought to surface.

The paper on "The Changing Life-style of the Bihor : From Nomadism to Settled Life" is the outcome of empirical research and author's encounters and experiences with the tribesman in the planned development process. The Bihors, as a primitive tribal group of the State, have experienced changes in their archaic life-style. The author also submits some suggestions cherishing a better tomorrow for the Bihors.

The paper on the "Saora Women : A study on their Socio-economic Status" analyses briefly the conceptual frame of social status of women in primitive societies and interprets the role of the Saora women on the basis of primary data collected from the field. The paper is a positive contribution in the area of the status of tribal women in general and the Saora women in particular.

We express our gratitude to the esteemed members of the Editorial Board for their kind co-operation and valuable suggestions in bringing out this volume. We shall be happy if the papers will be of some use to the research scholars and general readers.

K. K. MOHANTI  
DIRECTOR & EDITOR.

# UNDERSTANDING SARNA DHARAM

K. K. Mohanti  
S. C. Mohanty

The concept of *Sarna Dharma* or *Sarna Dhorom* originates from the common traditional religious institution of "sacred grove" found in the tribal villages which is regarded as the seat of one or more than one important village level deities including the village tutelary designated differently among various Mundari and Dravidian-speaking tribes of Chhotanagpur and surrounding regions comprising a large contiguous tribal belt covering parts of the States, of West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

Literary, the term *Sarna* is a Mundari word meaning the "sacred grove" and the term *Dharam* or *Dhorom* is an Indo-Aryan linguistic term, ordinarily meaning "religion". More specifically, *Dharam* or *Dhorom* is a twisted pronunciation of the Sanskrit word *Dharma* denoting "sacred law and duty, justice, religious merit". It is an important term in Sanskrit literature. Indian Commentators have explained it as denoting an act which produces the quality of the soul called *apurva*, the cause of heavenly bliss and final liberation. In ordinary usage, however, it has a far wider meaning than this, and may denote established custom or practice of any caste or community" (*Encyclopaedia of religion and Ethics*, 1954, IV; 702).

According to *Encyclopaedia Mundarica*, *Sarna* or *Sanza* denotes "a sacred grove wherein dwells one of the tutelary spirits as long as atleast one of the trees remains . . . . . Originally there were many and there may still be several sacred groves in a village . . . . . A tree in a *Sarna* may not be damaged or felled without the leave of the *Pahan* (the traditional village priest) who however, would first offer a sacrifice in the *Sarna* where the tree stands. But it is a fact that by giving such leave too easily *Sarnas* have disappeared and some villages have nothing left at all. In such villages the *Pahan* on the *batauli* feast will hold his sacrifice under any tree

whatever. In case of sickness private individuals may sacrifice in a *Sarna* to the spirit dwelling there, if this spirit has been revealed by its name in divination as the one responsible for the sickness, but they may not do so if the spirit causes harm in the capacity of a *garasi* (the name of a controversial and notorious spirit) or *nasan* (another local evil spirit). Witch-finders never sacrifice in the *Sarna*. (1950; XIII : 3816—3818).

Prior to the publication of the *Encyclopaedia Mundarica*, the noted ethnographer, S. C. Roy (1928) had hinted about *Sarna* in his famous book 'Oran Religion and Customs'. He maintained that the Oran—an important Dravidian speaking tribe of Chhotanagpur region have an elaborate pantheon of "Deities, Spirits and other super natural powers" at different level and rank in the descending order, (i) *Dharmes*—the Supreme God, (ii) *Pach-Balar* or Ancestor-Spirits, (iii) Village Deities and Spirits, (iv) Class Gods and Spirits, (v) *Khunt-Bhuts* or Clan Spirits, (vi) Household Spirits, (vii) Fetishes and other Minor Supernatural Powers, (viii) Tramp Spirits and Disease-Spirits, (ix) *Pugri-Bhuts* or Familiars of Individuals and (x) The Evil Eye and Other Occult Energies.

In the third category comprising the village level tutelary deities and spirits, there are some supernatural entities "regarded as *Deotas* or gods and others called *Bhuts* or ghosts. To the former section belong *Pat* or *Pat Raja*, *Chala panchcho* or *Sarna Burhia* and *Devi Mai*. To the latter section belong *Darha* and *Desauli* and in some villages, *Duaria* or *Duarsuni* and *Mahadania*. Besides these general villages deities and spirits there are special spirits which are sacrificed to as village spirits on some rock or tree in particular villages. Among minor village spirits are *Bansakti* or *Banjaribhut*, *Garadhorachatur-siman* and *Tusa-bhura*" (Roy; 15-16).

Roy observed that every Oran village has the supernatural institution of *Sarna*—the sacred grove of sal trees dedicated to their mighty tutelary deity *Chala pachcho* or the "Old Lady of the Grove" who is also known by other names such as *Sarna Burhia* and *Jhakra Burhia*. She is not only the chief village deity

but also the most popular, friendly and sociable among the Oraon deities and spirits. Therefore, she "receives sacrifices attended with the most elaborate ritual at the annual spring festival known as the **Khaddi** or **Sarhul** held in her honour.... the deity and her people enter into communion at the periodical sacrifices by sharing the same sacrificial meat and drink.... It is interesting to note that the Oraons believe that **Chala Panchcho** is such a mighty deity that hungry dogs and greedy vultures dare not touch the remnants of the sacrificial feast left at **Sarna** nor even the cast-away leaves of the sacrificial feast" (1986: 42-43).

Further, according to Roy, "in some villages in the more open parts of the district, the **sarna** has now dwindled down to a small knot of trees only and in a few villages the old **sal** trees of the **sarna** having disappeared under the axe, some other tree now serves the purpose of the **sarna** grove. The taboo against cutting down any tree of the **sarna** grove is in such cases got over by offering some sacrifices to the **sarna** deity". (Ibid: 43-44). Burning or otherwise desecrating the **sarna** trees is strictly prohibited.

**Chala-Pachcho**, the chief deity of **sarna** ordinarily resides in the sacred **Chala-Kutti**, the holy compartment inside the house of the village **Pahan**. Here the sacred winnowing basket called **Chala-Keter** or **Sarna-set** is her seat. During the annual **Sarhul** festival she represented by the **Sarna-sup** is led in a procession by the **Pahan** accompanied by the villagers to the **sarna** where her seat is represented by a stone block at the foot of the **sarna** tree. Minor village spirits who are usually the spirits of nature and collectively called **Garha-dhorha-Chatur-Siman** or **Ban sakti** (ranked in the seventh and eighth order in the Oraon Pantheon as given earlier) are also invoked on occasions of the periodical sacrifice at the **sarna** in addition to special sacrifices made to them for saving the people from epidemics.

The Munda, an important Kolarian speaking major tribe of Chhotanagour region who are also the immediate neighbours of the Oraon, share the common holy institution of **sarna** with the latter, though there are differences in their nature of religious belief, rituals as well as

orientations. The Munda pantheon is composed of their Supreme Deity, **Sing Bonga** (The Sun God) at the apex, the nature gods, ancestral spirits, village deities and other benevolent and malevolent deities and spirits. Their important village deities are, **Desauli Bonga**, **Devi Bonga** or **Devi Mai** (a female deity borrowed from the Hindu caste neighbours) and **Jayabongake**, who are associated with the institution of **sarna**. These three are classed by the Munda as **Manitabonga** or beneficent gods who save the village from diseases and calamities and bring prosperity. They are worshipped by the traditional village priest, **pahan** on certain occasions in the sacred grove (**sarna**) by offering prayer, foods and animal sacrifices.

In a Munda village, according to Sachchidananda "**Sarna** or **Jayar** is a protected place.... It is situated between thickly grown trees which are forbidden to be cut. **Sarna** represents the vestige of the original forest which was cleared by the original settlers of the village long back while establishing the village. The **Pahan** worships the various deities of the Munda Pantheon at the time of **Sarhul** in the **Sarna** for the prosperity of the village". (1979: 266).

The concept and practice of **sarna** extends to another major and important Mundari speaking tribe, the Santal, living in the same habitat and eco-cultural region as those of the Oraon and Munda. The holy institution in a Santal village is called **Jaherthan**, **Jahera** (in short) or the "Holy Grove", which according to Charulal Mukherjee (1943:162-163) is revered as the seat of the village deity designated as **Monrenko turuko**, literally meaning the five six. This deity who is now considered to be a single entity is addressed in plural. "The Santals believe that they were five brothers, (**Monren=five**) who were wedded to six sisters named **Dangi**, **Pungi**, **Hisi**, **Dummi**, **Chita** and **Kapra** (**Turuko=Six**). They are supposed to preside over the welfare of the village. His younger sister '**Gosane era**', constitutes a separate deity of the **Jaherthan** (Holy Grove) and is offered worship in a different hut. '**Jaher era**', another sister of "**Monrenko**" is the goddess of **Jaherthan** (Holy Grove) named after her. She has a stone assigned as her symbol.

The Santal worship her for the general welfare of the village, so that their children may have good health, crops may grow in plenty and the youths and maids of the tribe may be married quickly .... at Mayurbhanj (there are) stones in the *Jaherthan* (Holy Grove) which were supposed to represent these deities. During all public festivals huts are raised to worship them suitably ... three huts are raised; one to house, 'Jaher era', 'Maran Buru' and 'Monrenko', a second for 'Gosane era' and the third for another village deity, 'Manjhi haram'. But there are instances when a fourth one is insisted on by younger folk, to honour the younger brother of Manjhi, called 'Hudin Manjhi Haram'. However, *Jaherthan* is the seat of first three deities and Manjhi Haram have a different seat in the village called Manjhihan where he is routinely worshipped as a separate shrine.

Like their Munda neighbours, the Santal believe in the dichotomy of their supernatural world into good or benevolent and bad or malevolent beings, whom they classify as *manita bongas* and *banita bongas*, respectively. Taking into account their respective domain of interaction, all their deities and spirits have been grouped under ten broad categories by Troisi (1979:79):—

1. Village Tutelary Gods and Spirits consisting of *Maran Buru*, *Monrenko Turuiko*, *Jaher era*, *Gosane era*, *Pargana Bonga* and *Manjhi Haram Bonga*.
2. The sub-clan Spirits called the *Abge Bongas*.
3. Household Spirits called *Arak Bongas*.
4. Ancestral Spirits called *Hapramko Bongas*.
5. Tutelary Spirits of the santal *Ojhas* called *Saket Bongas*.
6. The *Jem Sim Bongas*—the Tutelary *Bongas* associated with their Supreme Deities namely the *Sing Bonga* and the *Maran Buru*.
7. *Diku Bongas*—the deities borrowed from the caste Hindus.
8. Malevolent Deities and Spirits including the Nature Gods such as the *Sima Bongas*

(the village boundary spirits) *Bahre Bongas* (the spirits of village outskirts), *Hill Spirits*, *Water Spirits* etc.

9. Mischievous Spirits like *Nihar Bongas*, *Kisar Bongas*, *Thapna Bongas* etc. who are manipulated to cause harm and also exercised by the *Ojha* (the Witch Doctor).
10. The Tramp or Stray Mischievous Spirits and Impersonal Powers who are to be driven away through magic and exorcism.

Among these the village tutelary deities like *Monrenko Turuiko*, *Jaher era*, *Gosane era*, *Pargana Bonga* who are said to be residing in *Jaherthan* or the village sacred grove and also the *Manjhi haram Bonga* who has a different seat called *Manjhihan* are very important as they are benevolent deities and intimately connected with the day-to-day life of the Santal. They look after the welfare of the village, have control over rain, crops and epidemics, bring good health, good crops and general prosperity and protect the villagers from evil forces, epidemics and calamities. Troisi (1979:72) holds "Though it is true that, by and large, the Santals are unable to have precise terms and concepts regarding the exact nature and function of "most of their deities, it is only their deities of the sacred grove to whom they ascribe definite form, individuality and personality for their direct association with their mundane life. "Other spirits though endowed with personality are in fact group spirits. each class contains more than one spirit bearing similar attributes" (Ibid; 1979:72).

The village deities consisting of the deities of sacred grove the *Manjhi Haram* are believed to guide the Santal in every concern of life and also to order every human event. Though their aid good omens are said to be acquired when searching for a new village. When appealed to, they are also said to stop any kind of epidemic. They are also credited with the supervision of the Santal as tribe. Some scholars have chosen to describe them as the "national deities" of the Santals. Because of the importance given to these *Jaher* spirits, the Santals are very careful not to make these

spirits feel neglected or insulted. They must also on no account be polluted since it is believed that once the village becomes polluted, these *bongas* immediately withdraw their protective power and concern, thus leaving the villagers vulnerable to harm brought about by mischievous spirits. As a consequence, no festival is performed unless a village is judged to be totally cleansed from defiling impurities: (Ibid; 1979 : 85).

The institution of sacred grove is a permanent feature in all the villages. Each and every village have this institution. But the villagers of one village can not participate in the sacred grove rituals of any other village except their own. "Besides if one family were to move to another village, the members of that family acquire a relationship with the new sacred grove. This association of a village with the *jaher* expresses the ritual unity of the group" (Ibid, 1979 : 86).

Mahapatra considers *Sarna* or *Jaherthan* as one of the two important and essential institutions of a Santal village. The other one is *Samsan*— the burial and cremation ground. The sacred grove is the place of community worship and generally located at the outskirts of the village. "Here the *Jaher era*, the presiding Goddess of the Santals resides. At the time the village is established, the *Bongas* are brought into the sacred grove to the accompaniment of an elaborate ritual ..... Customarily no one is allowed to desecrate a *Jahera* (*sarna*) by felling any tree standing within its limits. In recognition of this ancient custom, Article 153 of Mayurbhanj Forest Manual strictly prohibits the felling of trees in a *Jahera* ....".

Further he states, "Village feuds develop when attempts are made to use the timber of the trees in the *Jahera* which fall down due to natural causes .... To cut the trees would be to desecrate the place and drive away the gods with their protection and bounty" (1986:27-28).

In the past "the village unity was always symbolized primarily by the *Sarna* and *Manjhi*" (the traditional village chief). *Sarna* as the common place of worship reinforces the unity of a village and its hamlets if there are any, sometimes the hamlets break away from

the main village and become an independent unit by deciding not to obey the *Manjhi* of the main village, then electing a new *Manjhi* for their settlement and subsequently establishing a new *Sarna* of their own. "If the hamlet does not have a cluster of sal trees to serve as the *Sarna*, a plantation is sought to be raised, often with quick growing trees like eucalyptus. With its own *Manjhi* and its own *Sarna* the hamlet becomes a new socio-cultural entity, a new unit of community life, a new village. No doubt it still remains a part of the old revenue village and also remains recorded as such in all revenue records of the Government, but for all practical purposes relevant to santal life and society, it becomes a new village" ( Ibid, 1986 : 33).

"The Santal believes in a balance between the world of man and the natural world around. The hill, the hill streams, the trees, the forests, the paddy fields, the village *Sarna* and the village *Busti*, each has its appointed place. In terms of space they co-exist and fit into an intricate mosaic. Ecological balance is therefore, natural to his thinking. He is not interested in large scale deforestation what is known as *podu* cultivation, the sal trees at the outskirts of the village where the major deities, the *Maranburu*, *Maneka*, *Turuyoka* and *Jaher era* reside, are really the remnants of an earlier time, when there were dense jungles around. The Santal would like to live in peace with his natural world. He rarely aspires to conquer the natural world". (Ibid, 1986; 39).

Thus, the institutions of traditional leadership and community worship of the village tutelary deities establish the very identity, independence and autonomy of a Santal settlement.

Making a scholarly sociological analysis of the santal religion Troisi opines, "Santal religion" is not "a set of abstract beliefs in isolation but ... an essential part of the Santal social structure ... the relationship between the Santal religious universe and the social structure is so intimate that one can not be fully understood without the other. The intimate inter-relationship between the Santals and their spirits is concretely manifested in their seasonal (and also special occasional and life cycle) rites and festivals .... the main object of

all these rites and ceremonies are two fold; (i) to remove the pollution attendant on individual's household and village community and protect them against any calamities at the hands of the evil spirits; and (ii) to purify the individual himself, keeping him away from any hostile spirits and to ensure for him the security and protection given by the benevolent spirits".

"Santal magic and religion overlap one another and .... both are simultaneously pursued in the Santal's attempt at confronting the unknown supernatural world". In short "the life of every Santal is cast within the frame work of his religious and magical beliefs.... Underlying all religious and magical rituals and ceremonies is the conviction that the welfare of the society and the individual depends on establishing a balance between man, nature and the supernatural universe" (1979 : 236-239).

#### **Religion of the Santal, Munda and Oraon whether ANIMISM or BONGAISM ?**

Scholars, from most of the branches of social sciences starting from Philosophers, Historians and psychologists to Sociologists and Social Anthropologists, have studied religion from different angles and put forth several theories. Social Anthropologist, E.E. Evans-Pritchard in his famous book, "Theories of Primitive religion" (1965) classified these various theories into two major groups; psychological and Sociological. "From another point of view, studies in the Sociology of primitive religion from the nineteenth century onwards reveal two major trends, evolutionism and functionalism". Though the evolutionistic approach prevailed in the nineteenth century and the functionalism in the twentieth, both the approaches are not mutually exclusive. "For example, though Spencer propounded the theory of social evolution, it also included elements which were later associated with the theory of functionalism. On the other hand Durkheim though primarily concerned with functionalism, did not completely exclude the evolutionistic and historical assumptions, even among the exponents of the functionalist theory, there are differences of approach" (See Troisi, 1979 : 2).

Among the evolutionists there are two schools of thought regarding the theories on the origin of religion : "intellectual" and "emotional". Tylor and Spencer were the main proponents of the intellectual school. They explained religious beliefs in primitive societies as an intellectual attempt on the part of primitive man to understand natural phenomena and biological events. Both Spencers theory of 'manism' or ancestor worship and Tylor's theory of animism might be regarded as two versions of a dream theory of the origin of religion. In Tylor's view, since primitive man regarded other things to be like himself, by analogy he posited the existence of a soul not only in living creatures but also in inanimate objects. Man realised that the soul, the principle of life, survives the body and has physical power. After death the ghost soul become spirits and these in turn are first admired and then worshipped by living men. In time, the idea of ancestral ghosts developed into an idea of gods who needed to be propitiated and worshipped. By analogy, animals, plants and material objects were also deemed to have in dwelling spirits, and to be the haunts of human ghosts. The emotionalist approach on the other hand, rested on the claim that primitive man's belief in spiritual phenomena arose out of feeling of awe, wonder, fear, respect and admiration aroused by such natural entities as mountains and the sun or such natural occurrences as storms. What was common to most nineteenth century evolutionists was the assumption that primitive religion arose out of ignorance and intellectual inadequacy and therefore, would not last for ever. Though they emphasised the social usefulness of various religions, they looked at them as body of erroneous beliefs and illusory practices " (Troisi, 1979; 2-3)

While the above cited evolutionary theories mostly come under Psychological Theories of Religion, the Sociological theories are largely influenced by theories of functionalism which emerged as an alternative approach to the study of religion in the twentieth century. This theory is based upon the assumption that society is composed of several interdependent social institutions in such a way that changes occurring in one of them

not only affects others but also the whole society. The main advocates of this school were, Durkheim, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard. While Durkheim tried to analyse the social significance of religion by functional analysis, Malinowski through his in-depth empirical study of 'Trobriand Islanders', conceived of religion as arising out of basic human needs and predicaments. Radcliffe-Brown following some ideas of Durkheim emphasised on how religion, as expressed in its rituals, has a useful function in ordering society and that this function of religion is the essential and ultimate reason for its existence. He advocated a close correspondence between the form of religion and the form of social structure. The important characteristic features of religious beliefs of Indian tribes as outlined by Das (1983) is as follows :—

1. Animism—belief in soul having ethereal existence.
2. The size and appearance of soul differ from tribe to tribe.
3. Among some tribes, there is concept of multiple soul.
4. The soul is indestructible, immaterial and intangible.
5. There is prevalence of the concept of gods and spirits, supreme deity, ancestor-spirits, tutelary deities and evil spirits.
6. The supreme deity is benevolent.
7. More attention is paid to malevolent spirits.
8. Concept of soul and belief in after life gave rise to the ancestor worship.
9. The tutelary deities of the village in tribal societies resemble the *grama-devi* in Hindu life.
10. Evil spirits cause disease and death.

In the context of various theories of religion, and the salient features of the religions of the Indian tribes, the question arises as to whether, the religion of Chhotanagpur tribes like the Santal, the Munda or the Oraon can be classified as 'Animism' as propounded by Tylor or 'Bongalism'—a term coined by

Majumdar (1937 & 1950) to describe HO religion or 'Spiritism' as suggested by S. C. Roy (1928) and Elwin (1955).

Regarding Santal religion Troisi (1979: 240) holds, "It is true that the Santal believe in a host of spirits" and various unseen supernatural powers inhabiting "mountains, rocks, rivers and trees" etc.. However, to describe Santal religion as animistic appears to be inaccurate, if not actually a misnomer... Santal religion is essentially social". It "permeates every aspect of Santals life. It colours their economy, law and customs... there is no individual approach to the spirits. Fellowship is maintained through sacrificial offerings made on behalf of a particular social unit which is sometimes the whole village and sometimes as small as the household and through ceremonial eating and drinking". Religious beliefs and practices help to strengthen the Santals social unity and contribute to the existence and maintenance of the social order. Moreover, Santal worship centres around its sacred places—the *Jakeritan*, *Maujkitkan* and *Blitar* which are communal in character".

"That the Santal religion differs from animism can also be seen in their ancestor worship which occupies an important place in their religious beliefs". Further, the emotional aspects of Santal religion is conspicuous by its absence in Tylor's theory of Animism. "For the Santals the rituals and ceremonies evoke an emotion that goes beyond a mere response to practical needs. They bind the community together in their beliefs and give them a sense of sacred. Their major festivals and forms of worship can only be partially understood unless they are seen within the context of religious emotion or enthusiasm. It is interesting to note that S. C. Roy used the term 'spiritism' in designating the religion of the Kharias (1937 :332) and of the Oraons (1972:1). Elwin (1955) supports the concept of 'spiritism' in his study on the Savara tribe of Orissa. The latest Government Census Reports have given up the use of the term animism to designate tribal religions" (Ibid, 1979:242).

Then comes the concept of 'Bongalism' proposed by Majumdar (1937) in his analysis of the religious aspects the Ho tribe of

Chhotnagpur region. In his opinion the Ho religion centres around the belief in an impersonal supernatural power called *bonga* which pervades all space and is believed to take any shape or form and renders life to all plants and animals like the *Mana* of Melanesian tribes. He has extended this concept of 'Bongalism' to the religion of all major neighbouring tribes of the Chhotnagpur region like the Santal, the Munda etc.

Troisi has a different view. In his words, "This extension of the view of bongalism from Hos to the Santals is inadequate to explain Santal religion. It fails to describe the Santals' perception of relationship with their *bongas*". The Santal never believed in the term *bonga* meaning an impersonal and all pervading power, which is either indeterminate or devoid of definite form and function". The Santals have long attained the stage when man not only objectifies but also personifies the supernatural powers whom he propitiates. They not only differentiate between their various spirits but also have a conception of individual spirits as distinguished from group spirits. They not only personify the *bongas*, allotting them fixed abodes but also ascribe the more important among them with a more or less definite form and individuality". During certain festivals, *Jaher era*, *Mourenko-Turniko* and *Moran Buru* are visualised in the shape of human beings. "According to tradition, in choosing a *jaherthan* for their village, some Santals became possessed and the spirits are said to speak through them to demarcate the exact place where they want their sacred grove. Similarly, through spirit possession, the stones at the foot of the *jaher* trees are said to be put at the spirits command". Moreover the Santal's *bongas* are different from the *wana* of Melanesian tribes. Neither in Santal vocabulary there is a term equivalent to *mana*. "Though the Santali grammar distinguishes between animate and inanimate the distinction is not between living and dead matter or between spirit and matter but between what, has a soul and what has not. The Santals regard as inanimate those beings which are capable of independent action and movement. The word *bonga*, however, is always constructed with an animate form. In other

words, it would seem that one must look elsewhere than in the Santals belief in *bongas* for traces of a concept analogous to *mana* or to *Bongalism* as implied by Majumdar" (1979 : 245). Malinowski (1954 :36) has rightly said "The 'ism' of religion, must be given up for religion does not cling to any one object or class of objects" (1979 : 245).

S. C. Roy, who has exhaustively studied major Chhotnagpur tribes like the Kharia, Birhor, Oraon, etc., has found a general similarity in their religious systems. The only difference lies in their relative weighing of different classes of supernaturals in their pantheons. While the Oraon give greater importance to their supreme deity the *Dharmes* and also to the power of evil eye, the Mundari tribes are particularly solicitous about their *bongas*.

In Munda religion, the attitude towards the *bongas* "is one of reverential fear, dependence, submission and propitiation. Communication with these spirits is concretely manifested mainly through supplications, rice-beer offerings and animal sacrifices made on behalf of a particular group, be it whole village, lineage or household. To these, must be added the ceremonial sharing of sacrificial food, besides certain special observances and taboos" (Sachchidananda, 1979 : 264).

#### Persistence and Change:

The dynamics of change is an universal process that operates in all societies and cultures all the time. Acculturation i.e. the process of culture change resulting out of culture contact are mainly of two types; (i) incorporation and (ii) directed change. On the other hand the process which facilitates the retention of original customs and traditions and at the same time allows acceptances of new elements is called 'syncretism'. "The various forms of responses to directed change can be classified under three main processes- assimilation, fusion and reaction. The process of fusion, or as it is sometimes called, accommodation or reinterpretation, does not result in complete assimilation which, in actually, rarely takes place, since some features of the older culture always tend to



survive. The process of reinterpretation consists of reinterpreting the meaning of preexisting element in such a way as to suit the form of the new element that has to be accepted. The reaction process takes the form of nativistic movements" (Troisi, 1979 : 246). The emergence of the present concept of "Sarna Dharam" among the tribes of Chhotanagpur and surrounding regions including north-western tribal regions of Orissa seems to be a product of reinterpretation, reaction and syncretisation in response to the rapid socio-political changes taking place in the region.

Coming to the domain of religion of these tribes, their religion has come under the influence of the Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and numerous other endogenous and exogenous religious sectorian movements, like Vaishnavism, *Shakti Dharam*, *Birsa Dharam*, *Tana Bhagat*, *Alekh Dharam*, *Kabir Panth*, *Satsami*, etc. As the things stand today, Hinduism and its sectarian movements with whom they have been in close contact since the remote past have greater impact on their religion than other religions, though later since the last century Christianity have tried a persuasive entry into their socio-religious. However, looking at their present socio-religious life to say that, they have undergone considerable Hindu acculturation, both consciously and unconsciously, voluntarily and involuntarily, as a social mobility tactics directed towards improving their socio-economic status, shall not be incorrect. Subsequently, Christianity has made a dent in their way of life by giving them education, making them socially, politically and economically conscious and bringing about many noticeable changes and reforms in their age old traditional life styles.

Planned changes taking place in the region in the forms of industrialisation, urbanisation, mining, establishment of communication networks, spread of education etc. also have their impact on the socio-cultural lives of the tribes. The growth of education has led to a psychological phase in which the tribal rediscovers his culture or sets in motion the process of contra-acculturation. His first reaction has been to bring his religious beliefs

into line with those of the lower Hindu castes and this he did by shedding those practices which he thought were incongruent to those of his neighbours. On a mass scale this led to religious movements such as those initiated by Birsa. But this phase was followed by a marked reawakening of pride in certain aspects of Munda culture. ... Education also led to the emergence of a middle class among the Munda. Its ranks swelled by educated Mundas who are in government service or in professions like teaching, medicine and law. ... It is also from this elite that the demand for a separate state of Jharkhand emerges" (Sachchidananda, 1979 : 328-329).

Till the recent past, as Troisi (1979 : 257-259) puts it more systematically in case of the Santals, "the emulation of Hindu socio-religious practices was regarded as a means of improving their economic status. But in the 1930s, political events external to Santal society helped to check this drift which seemed to threaten their tribal solidarity. The path which the Santals were following was altered profoundly. This change was marked by a shift in emphasis from the socio-religious to the political aspect with a native socio-cultural resurgence...."

"...With the spread of National Freedom Movement, a new political consciousness emerged that was marked by a sense of exclusive Adivasi identity". (Ibid ; 1979 : 259). An Adivasi socio-political movement which later came to be known as Jharkhand Movement led by an Adivasi Political Party, the Jharkhand Party, started. "It aimed at establishing a tribally dominated state, asserting its tribal identity and autonomy of the region. It declared that the Jharkhand was the homeland of the Adivasis and that there is little hope of their regeneration unless the non Adivasi exploiters quit the area. Having emulated their Hindu neighbours to a great extent, yet desirous of maintaining their identity, the Jharkhand Movement though essentially a political movement, gave the Santals an opportunity to create a 'great tradition' of their own. As Orans (1965 :106) reported : The movement is spoken of in the

following terms. 'We should not leave our religion; we should continue to use rice-beer; we should have our worship at the sacred grove; also we should not stop eating beef; we will call our religion *Sarna Dhorom*'.

Sachchidananda observed in case of the Munda 'In recent years there has been a tremendous rise in the political consciousness of the Munda'. In addition to the emergence and growth of the Jharkhand party, 'a number of other organisations grew up. These characterised by political extremism, agrarian radicalism and cultural revivalism. An articulate and effective political elite has emerged. It has not only acquired a taste for politics, but is also vigorously contributing to the emergence of a new political idiom. It is conscious of tribal rights and is capable of making shrewd and calculated moves to gain their acceptance. Tribal problems are being politicised. Politics has emerged as the principal avenue through which tribal leaders look forward to finding solutions to their many problems'.

'... In recent years there has been a newly awakened interest in religious festivals and in identifying with the *sarna* religion. Many educated Munda claim *sarnaism* as their religion. In urban centers too the tribal festivals of *Sarkul* and *Karma* are celebrated with great enthusiasm. This may be due to resurgence of ethnicity. In most areas, however, the pantheon of the Munda has been enlarged by inclusion of popular Hindu deities... In the families of middle class Munda the Brahmin priests perform all the rituals'.

'... The missionaries played an important role in bringing about a social change among the Munda. Christianity gave them an ideology and a myth and a sense of history. It had also sharpened the feeling of separateness and emphasised the distinct identity of convert tribals. During British rule the missionaries had helped the tribal to regain their self-respect and dignity' (1979 : 334-36).

The above developments established the fact that social movements directed towards reinterpretation and syncretisation have already started among the Chhotanagpur tribes.

It seems relevant to cite quotation of Mahapatra's statement here; 'Social movements among the tribes are defined as deliberate banding together of the tribals involved for collective action to alter, reconstitute, reinterpret, restore, protect, supplement or create some portions of their culture or social order or to better their life by redistributing the power of control in a society. These movements have been shaped by influences of Hinduism, Christianity and forces released by the British rule. As education and consciousness develop, a pan-tribal movement may emerge' (1972 : xxi).

The transition manifested in the socio-political movements among the Chhotanagpur tribes appears to be more conspicuous among more articulate and numerically dominant tribal groups like the Santal, Bhumij, Ho, Munda and Oraon. In case of Santals, Mahapatra (1986 : 1) observed that they 'like all societies in transition, are caught between two worlds the intuitive supernatural and the matter-of-fact rational; the mythological past of glorious traditions and the present with degradations and poverty. Ethnic syncretism is linked to socio-economic discontinuities, and to the dream of a pan tribal unity incorporating not merely the Santals living in three states of Bihar, Orissa and Bengal, but also the related tribal groups, namely, the Mundas, Hos and Oraons. On the other hand there is an awareness of cultural autonomy and the need for its preservation. The more utilitarian aspects of this need as a way to political power has dawned on the educated among them. On the other hand, there is the advantage of adjusting ones own values and ideas to the parameters of change and development. This necessarily induces an ambivalence in the approach both to tradition and modernisation. The Santal society which is numerically one of the largest of tribal groups, and is culturally very self-conscious, illustrates this search for identity, and attempts at its redefinition in a new and emerging milieu'.

The Munda society is also undergoing a similar transformation. 'There is no doubt, however, that the Munda are proceeding towards the mainstream but this by no means

requires them to shed such items of their culture which they consider important and valuable in terms of their deity... The direction of change is unmistakable. The Munda like other small communities living in a multi-ethnic society are approximating the styles of living prevalent in the dominant community... Modern forces are so strong that they have involved Munda society in a way that its problems can only be viewed in a Pan-Indian frame. Even the demand for a separate state of Jharkhand is being justified by the argument in favour of small states of speedy development" (Sachchidananda, 1979 : 338-339).

There are found two sets of symbols in a society undergoing rapid change — the primitive ritual ridden symbols of identity and the modern politically oriented symbols. The tribal societies of the Santal, Munda, Ho and Oraon are trying to find a balance, between the dichotomy of symbols, between technology and ritual and between politics and culture.

In the context of New Tribal Religious Movements it is stated in the New Encyclopaedia Britannica (Vol. 18, 1981; 697—705) that there has been encounters between tribal peoples and higher civilizations and are manifested by 'a vast proliferation of religious movements. These movements have been designated in various terms, such as 'revolutionary cults' rebellious prophets' or 'protonationalist movements'; 'crisis or deprivation cults', 'reformative or revitalization movements', 'separatist or independent sects', 'voluntary religious societies and popular movements', 'adjustment or acculturation or of nativistic, perpetuative, revivalistic, or transformative movements'. The religious features have some distinguishing characteristic features, such as 'heretical', 'syncretistic' or 'prophet movements', 'eschatological' (with an emphasis on end time), 'millennial' or 'messianic cults' or 'pentecostal' (spiritual or charismatic) or 'visionary' sects.

While exploring the general causative factors of these movements four types of causal factors have been emphasized and they are, situational or acculturative, contributory, precipitative and enabling factors. "In India

there have been many examples of new religious movements since the late 18th century, chiefly among the hill tribal peoples, in response to a closer encounter with Hindu culture and religion or to a Western Christian Influence" (Ibid : 703-4).

Mahapatra observed among the Chhotanagpur tribes, "At the moment, there is a growing dichotomy between the awareness and demand for cultural autonomy, and the ability to forge an organisation for economic and political development and social action. This only further alienates the elites (more particularly the political and economic elites) from the masses, and tradition and ritual form the new demands of political organisation and economic activity.... The Sarna organisation is also systematically propagating a new view on several aspects relating to tradition, heritage and mythology. This view for example, connects witchcraft to sin, and holds that where there is no sin, there can be no witches". (1986 : 113).

Over period of time and particularly under the present rapidly changing socio-political circumstances, the tribal revivalistic movements have redefined the traditional institution of sacred grove (sarna) which is a basically the cult of village tutelary deities—a religious institution which the tribesmen claim to be original and endogenous of their culture, to emerge as the common tribal religion of Chhotanagpur and surrounding tribal regions. Following the trend, in the tribal pockets of north-western Orissa, an association named Adivasi Cultural Association was formed in Mayurbhanj in 1953 which was subsequently renamed as Adivasi Socio-Educational and Cultural Association and functioned under the guidance of the charismatic tribal leader Pandit Raghunath Murmu who invented the 'Ol Chhli' script. The basic objectives of this organisation was revival, restoration and promotion of tribal language, religion, heritage, dance and music traditions and education through the medium of tribal language. The association in a meeting held at Raipur in 23-24 June 1962 adopted a resolution demanding Sarna Dherom as their common religion and Mundari as their common

language, to be adopted as the medium of instruction in the schools.

"Raghunath Murmu founded the Sarna Dharam Semlet (Sacred Grove Religious Organisation). It was to the Jharkhand Party, what the RSS was to the Jan Sangh. Murmu emphasized the supremacy of the Santal culture, and the role of tribal songs, dances, arts and crafts, customs and beliefs. A number of drama clubs were organised which played an important part in this cultural innovation. Raghunath Murmu made a plea that Sarna should be treated as the religion of the Santals, and it should be considered to be outside the Hindu fold. Largely due to his efforts and the support of the Jharkhand party, a large number of Santals and other tribals, returned their religion as Sarna and not Hinduism during 1951 census. In order to prove that they were not Hindus the Santals were urged to take to cow sacrifice, eating of beef, drinking of beer, the use of traditional customs, and observation of traditional rituals and festivals. Attempts were made to persuade them not to join the festivals of non tribals. A new religious ideology with emphasis on hard work and morality was sought to be built up. The sacred grove came to be treated as the equivalent of Hindu temple. The model for the projection of cultural self-image was thus a Hindu made". (Mahapatra, 1986 : 51-2).

#### Hinduism and Sarna Dharam :

The Hinduism is a major, complex and one of the most ancient religions of the world which claims to be universal in character while the newly emerging tribal religion called Sarna Dharam basically originates from the common religious institution of sacred grove of Chhotanagpur tribes representing the cult of village tutelary deities. A similar cult of village tutelary deity locally called Gram Deoti is present in Hinduism but it only forms a small part of the total religion while the tribal elites claim sarna to be original and endogenous to their culture, there is no authentic historical data to determine to which group and religion the cult of village deity is original and endogenous and which group borrowed the cult from the other as both the ethnic groups have lived together side by

side in close interaction with each other since time immemorial under the process of cultural symbiosis.

"Hinduism", according to Chatterjee (1956), "in its various ramifications derived from a common stock is an exceedingly interesting and instructive subject to pursue. It is not at all a single religion with a creed to which everybody must subscribe. It is rather a federation of different kinds of approach to the reality that is behind life". L.A. Verma (1956 : 32) while reviewing the ritual aspects of Hinduism said "The greatness of Hinduism lies in this fact that it supplies forms, methods, and measures to suit all possible types of men".

Many scholars who subscribe to this view regarding the evolution of religion-philosophic culture in India hold that "the worship of Siva and Sakti may be regarded as the oldest form of Indian theistic religion" (Majumdar, 1956 : 32). The tribals of India who lived under strong influence of Hinduism since the remote past have heavily borrowed Hindu religious elements and incorporated them in their religious beliefs and practices in their own cultural style. Most of the Chhotanagpur tribes have done this. For example, "The religious interaction of the Hindu and Munda systems led to Siva being accepted as Mahadev Bonga and Parvati as Chandi Bonga. To the Munda festivals, the Hindu influence added *Dasai*, *Karam*, *Phagu*, *Jitia* and *Mahadev Munda Mela*. . . Some Hindu practices have been adopted without understanding their real significance, and beliefs connected with these practices also undergo a change by the time they reach the tribals". (Sachchidananda, 1979 : 303-4).

Coming to sarna- the cult of village tutelary deity, this concept "is as old as Neolithic times, when settled habitation first came into being. It is one of the most ancient institutions of man, and is found among the savage and the civilized. In India, it is a common feature of all the areas where primitive man is found. In Orissa, Madras State, and the extreme south of the Indian peninsula, it is a very prominent trait of rural Hindu life. In almost every village of Orissa, there is a gram-deoti (village goddess), who is often identified with

one of the different forms of the Mother Goddess' (Das, 1983 : 429).

Among the aboriginal population of India, the tutelary deity appears in almost all areas. In Chhotanagpur, this concept has made considerable progress. Among the Santals, Mundas, Hos, Oraons, Kharias and others, every village has a sacred grove where the tutelary deities of the village reside, and where they are worshipped this grove is generally a patch of the primeval sal forest, left in tact to serve as a sort of refuge to the local spirits, when the village was first established by clearing the surrounding area of its natural vegetation. It generally lies outside the village, at a distance from it. The land of the grove belongs to the village community as a whole, and the trees in it are sacred and their cutting is tabooed. A few pieces of stone placed under some specified types of trees are the seats of the different gods and goddesses associated with the village' (Ibid; 1983 : 430).

While studying the impact of Hinduism on the Santal, Troisi observed, 'It can now be seen that continuous first hand contacts between the Santals and the Hindus did create a condition favourable for acculturation and generally led to reciprocal borrowings. By itself this contact was not sufficient for radical readjustment. The adoption of a number of Hindu deities, festivals, customs and concepts, however, has not changed the basic character of Santal religion. The belief in the *bengas* is still strong. . . though all aspects of Santal life have been affected by contact with the neighbouring Hindus the degree of change is least in the Santal religious sphere' (1979 : 259-60).

On the contrary, a more normative religion, like Christianity which sets norms to control individual's conduct not only in religious but also in social spheres has lesser impact on Santal religion as it appeared to them to threaten cultural autonomy and to certain extent their social solidarity.

On the other hand, Hinduism, which is comparatively more tolerant and less normative 'allowed the Santals to borrow new religious ideas and practices in such a way that the autonomous character of their religions, social and cultural institutions was not

undermined. Unlike the adoption of Christian beliefs and practices, Hindu beliefs and rituals could be grafted on to the Santal religion without necessitating its assimilation or total absorption into Hinduism. Another point to be kept in mind is that a popular Hinduism is widely diffused and affects the Santal in numerous ways without they are being conscious of it'. (Ibid, 1979 : 272-273).

Thus, the religious beliefs and practices of Chhotanagpur tribes have been able to survive the influence of two major and powerful religions like Hinduism and Christianity without losing its distinctive identity and hold over its people. The traditional religious institution of *Sarna* has reemerged as the common religion of these tribes to assert their group identity in the backdrop of their socio-political revivalistic movement.

'Of social movements, the most notable is the self-conscious socio-political movement aimed at asserting political solidarity of a tribe or a group of tribes vis-a-vis the non tribals. They arise out of ecological-cultural isolation, economic backwardness, a feeling of frustration vis-a-vis the advanced sections. . . The policy implications of this analysis are obvious; there should be provisions for larger economic opportunities and greater understanding with the emerging core of the Indian national culture'. (Singh, 1972:XX-XXI).

It transpires from the above discussion that the newly emerging *Sarna* Dham basically originates from the common, permanent and traditional religious institution of 'sacred Grove' of Chhotanagpur tribes representing the cult of village tutelary deities which is equivalent to the cult of *Gram Devati* of the neighbouring Hindu castes. This is one of the most ancient cults existing among the Hindus and aboriginal communities since Neolithic times. In these days with the appearance of socio-political revivalistic movements directed towards ethnic syncretism and asserting tribal identity among the tribes of Chhotanagpur and surrounding regions, the traditional institution of *Sarna* which the tribes men claim to be the original and endogenous of their culture have been revived and redefined to be promoted as their common religion.

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# TOTEMIC GROUPS, TITLE GROUPS AND OTHER SOCIAL GROUPS AMONG THE GADABA

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P. K. Nayak

## 1-1. PREPONDERANCE OF TOTEMIC GROUPS—

The Lamtaput area under survey, keeping Lamtaput as the nucleus reveals that there are as many as 9 (nine) totemic groups found distributed in the Gadaba villages. These totemic groups are as follows —

1. Tiger (Killo/Khila/Killa)
2. Snake (Hantal/Ontal)
3. Sun (Khara/Kara)
4. Fish (Macha/ Mach)
5. Monkey (Gollarie)

6. Kite/Vulture (Pangi)
7. Bear (Babu)
8. Cow (Sukri)
9. Cat (Girem)

Among these totemic groups, the most preponderant are, the 'Tiger', the 'Snake' and the 'Sun' groups, which are almost sizably distributed around Lamtaput within a radius of 20 Kms forming a sub-complex : the tiger groups distributed in as many as 11 villages and the other totemic groups, such as, the Fish, Monkey, Kite/Vulture, Bear, Cow and Cat are found distributed within the sub-complex limited to a few villages only.

From the numerical preponderance and concentration of the three totemic groups, such as, the tiger, snake and the sun groups are relatively the primary settler groups whereas the other totemic groups are the secondary settlers, the centres of their respective original settlement being somewhere beyond Lamtaput.

TABLE : 1  
Distribution of totemic households of 8 villages

Sl. No.	Village Name	Total groups and their respective households						
		Tiger	Snake	Sun	Fish	Cow	Monkey	Bear
1.	Pipalput	41	16	06	..	..	..	..
2.	Tukum	85	01	..	..	..	..	..
3.	Kangrapada	05	95	..	06	..	..	..
4.	Changudipada	..	24	..	..	..	..	04
5.	Dudipadar	..	10	05	..	..	..	..
6.	Sankai	..	..	62	..	..	..	..
7.	Lugum	01	..	10	..	80	01	..
8.	Sailapada	40	20	10	..	..	..	..

**Analysis :** From the above table it is evident that Pipalput, Tukum and Sailpada are mostly Tiger-totemic group dominated villages, Kangrapada, Changudipada and Dudipadar are the Snake-totemic group dominated villages, Sankai is the only Sun-totemic group dominated village and Lugum the only Cow-totemic group dominated village.

### Explication :

- (a) Tiger—Tukum, Pipalput, Sailpada
- (b) Snake—Kangrapada, Dudipadar, Changudipada.
- (c) Sun—Sankai
- (d) Cow—Lugum

As we know the totemic group classification is one of the fundamental factor in social structure. Each such group is identified by hereditary emblem which transmits itself through the male line to the succeeding generation. The emblem is symbolically represented through animate or inanimate objects.

The observance of the totemic group symbol among Gadabas is manifested in the following manner. Firstly, the animal symbolism is honoured through its worship. It is a grave social sin to kill an animal of the symbol. Such a killing is expiated by 'Biru Puja'. This means the sinner has to perform ritual by offering hen, rice, turmeric, egg, fruit, etc. The second type of symbolic representation is through inanimate object. A predominant such groups is 'Sun' totem group. But the Sun is the Sungod who is propitiated.

## 12. ORIGIN MYTH:

The origin history of Gadaba totemic groups dates back to unknown past. As the myth goes twenty-six (26) original inhabitants of Godavari Coast migrated towards 'Kiskindhya' about 6,000 years ago. While coming across the dense forest on the way they decided to sub-group themselves. Then two

groups were formed symbolised by 'Tiger' and 'Snake' totems. These two groups cooked sacred rice (Charubhata) separately and went for hunting. On return, one person was missing. 12 persons of snake group and 13 persons of tiger group partook the sacred rice separately. Then that missing person came subsequently but since he did not partake the sacred rice along with the rest of the group, he became isolated and was identified as a separate group called 'Ollaro'. Each member of the individual group united with other members of the same group by partaking the sacred rice is called 'Charubhai'. Then other totemic groups, are formed. It is said coming in contact with other neighbouring groups the other totemic groups have come up.

This myth suggests that originally the Gadaba belonged to one stock and later they got divided into two equal halves, but under the exigency the third group could be formed which was attributed a relatively unequal status and eventually rest other groups branched off.

## 13. MARRIAGE:

The totemic groups are exogamous, which means, the marriage is prohibited within the same totemic group. The person cannot marry the members of his own totemic group.

TABLE : 2  
Cases of Inter-totemic group marriage in Five Gadaba villages

Village Name	Ti Sn	Ti Su	Ti Fi	Ti Mo	Sn Su	Sn Ki	Sn Fi	Sn Mo	Sn Be	Sn Co	Su Ki	Su Fi	Ti Be
Pipalput	46	17	..	04	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tukam	54	..	16	04	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Kangrapada	80	..	02	..	16	02	16	02	..	..	..	..	..
Changudipada	19	..	..	..	..	04	..	03	05	02	..	..	04
Sankai	..	24	..	..	16	..	..	..	..	..	16	05	..
Total :	199	41	18	08	32	06	16	05	05	02	16	05	04

Note : Ti=Tiger, Sn=Snake, Su=Sun, Fi=Fish, Mo=Monkey, Ki=Kite, Be=Bear, Co=Cow.



An analysis of the available data indicates that the tiger totemic group establishes its marriage relationship mostly with snake totemic group and vice-versa. Perhaps these two totemic groups consider themselves as the most original and earliest among all Gadaba Groups. Although there are exceptions and deviations, the inter-marriage between members of tiger and snake totemic group is most common.

Though it cannot be conclusively established at this stage because of non-availability of further information from other villages) no inter-marriage seems to be found among the following groups.

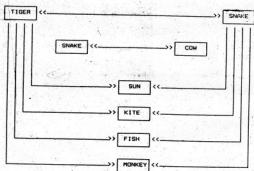
Tiger : marrying Kite, Cow and Cat

Snake : marrying Cat

Sun : marrying Monkey, Bear and Cat

#### 1-4. LEMENTARY STRUCTURAL OPPOSITION BETWEEN TOTEMIC GROUPS :

From the survey of 5 Gadaba villages the frequent inter marrying totemic groups are posited below in structural opposition to one another and the respective totemic groups have been classified according to the principle of their dwelling as follows :



BEAR	TIGER	SNAKE	COW
Land dwelling	Land dwelling	Sub-Terranean	Land dwelling
Four footed animal	Bigger in size	Smaller in size	Bigger in size
Ferocious	Ferocious	Venomous	Mild
Non-vegetarian in diet	Walks and jumps	Crawls	Walks and jumps
Walks and jumps	Non-vegetarian in diet	Non-vegetarian in diet	Vegetarian in diet

MONKEY	SUN	KITE	FISH
Tree dwelling	Sky	Sky	
Walks and jumps	Celestial	Bipedal	Aquatic
Imitative	Universal	Smaller in size	smaller in size
Vegetarian in diet	Fierce rays	Both vegetarian and non-vegetarian in diet	

#### 14. LEADERSHIP AND DOMINANCE :

The socio-political leadership normally is held by the members of the numerically dominant totemic group who are supposed to have been the first settler, and therefore dominant. Inter-village disputes are settled within the village with the authority of the village Headman, Naik, others, whereas inter-village disputes are sometimes resolved at an inter-totemic group level.

#### 24 GROUPS :

The title groups of the Gadaba Society have both social, economic and political connotation. Each title group has some status position. Gadabas formed their title groups according to their function during the reign of the King of Jeypore. The following few title groups will explain their relative status position.

**BADO NAIKA** Functions as the political head of the village, hence the descendants are known under the Bado Naika status group.

**KIRSANI** Assistant of Bado Naika and functions as political head in Bado Naika's absence and hence the descendants of Kirsani are known as Kirsani.

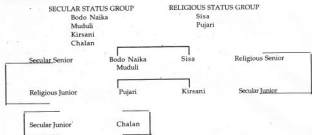
**SISA** Sisa is the village priest. The descendants of the priest from the Sisa status group.

**PUJARI** Assists Sisa and prepares and cooks food on religious occasion and the descendants are known to be having Sisa social status.

**MUDULI** Looks after revenue matters and the group possesses that social status.

**CHALAN** Acts as the messenger and the descendants have this social status.

## 2.2. DUAL DISTINCTIONS IN HIERARCHY :



In the social status hierarchy Bada-Naika is given an elevated status as compared to the rest of the title groups (horizontally). This elevated status emanated from the grace of the rulers of Jeypore. But on account of new emerging social factor and also on account of different social outlook a few instances are also noticed where the Bada-naika does not enjoy such a superior social status. For example in the village Sankai there are three title groups found namely Bada-naika, Muduli and Kirsani. Muduli title group has numerical strength of having 38 house-holds and Bada-naika and Kirsani title group have 22 and 2 households respectively. In this village the political leadership is occupied by the Muduli title group.

The members of one title group of the village are genealogically related. They act as a corporate group. The members form a unitary group and come together to carry out some collective action during birth, marriage or death rites, economic activities and also at times for self defence.

### 3. CHORUBHAI RELATIONSHIP :

On the basis of inter-linking one group (totemic group and/title group) with another group and one village with another, especially in respect of their mutual Chorubhai relationship at the empirical level, clearly presented in the schematic form, it is generally observed that :—

- (a) Chorubhai relationship is always confined to the same totemic group and it is within the members of the same totemic group only. In other words it is an intra-totemic group relationship.
- (b) Secondly, the Chorubhai relationship is always between two different title groups of the same totemic group. That is, it is always found at inter-title-group level.

In the cases only (out of a total collection of 27 cases of Chorubhai relationship in 29 villages), a title group of one village has Chorubhai relationship with similar title group of another village (Badanaik title group of Tikarpada stand in Chorubhai relationship with the same group of Panjal, similarly Badanaika group of Sankai has Chorubhai relationship with the same title group of Chaupada). This could not be considered as an exception rather it might be taken as a part of the regular occurrence, and further information can highlight it better.

- (c) In almost all the cases, one title group of one village used to have Chorubhai relationship with another title of another village.



Only in one case this relationship is exhibited between title groups of the same village. That is, in village Tikrapada, the Badanaika group has Chorubhai relationship with Muduli and Kirsani, and in turn Muduli and Kirsani are related through Chorubhai relationship.

- (d) Thus the pattern of Chorubhai relationship can be depicted as follows:

- => It is a relationship always within the same totemic group.
- => It is a relationship between two title groups of the same totemic group.
- => It is an inter-group relationship always outside the village.

Chorubhai is the most vital link in the social cohesion of Gadaba Society. It denotes the life-long association of a Gadaba Society from birth to death. The socio-religious function of a Gadaba Society cannot be performed without the presence of Chorubhai.

The presence of Chorubhai is necessary in all rituals. The Chorubhai cooks 'Charubhata' (sacred rice). When Gadabas are polluted due to birth of a child or death of person, they partake the sacred rice and become purified. There are occasions when a member of a Chorubhai group is excommunicated by the rest of the group. When a person of the Gadaba Society marries outside his own tribe or caste then he is excommunicated. But the social rules and customs provide for re-entry of the excommunicated member through a special ceremony. In this ceremony the Chorubhai sprinkles holy water on the excommunicated member. The holy water is prepared by putting a golden ornament in the water which is the symbol of purification. The presence of Chorubhai is very important in Gotar ceremony. On the Gotar day the main buffalo is sacrificed and the Chorubhai is given the front half and Panjabhai is given the back half which reveals that the status of Chorubhai is higher than the Panjabhai. The relationship of Chorubhai remain constant and continues from generation to generation. No marital link can be established with Chorubhai.

#### 4. PANJIABHAI RELATIONSHIP :

On the basis of inter-linking one totemic group or title group with another and one

village with another, specially in respect of their mutual Panjabhai relationship at the empirical level, clearly presented in the schematic form, it is generally observed that :

- (a) Panjabhai relationship is established in intra as well as inter-totemic group level. Out of 27 cases collected in 29 villages it is found that in 17 cases a totemic group has Panjabhai relationship with similar totemic group of another village and only 10 cases a totemic group has established its Panjabhai relationship with dissimilar totemic groups of other villages.
- (b) Secondly, the Panjabhai relationship is found both in similar and dissimilar title group level within the same totemic group. Out of 17 cases it is found that there are only 3 cases of similar title groups and 14 cases of dissimilar title group.
- (c) Thirdly, in inter-totemic group level the Panjabhai relationship is always between two different title groups of different totemic group. In this case Panjabhai relationship exists both in inter-title group as well as inter-totemic groups level. Only in one case a title group of one totemic group of one village has Panjabhai relationship with similar title group of another totemic group of another village (Muduli title group of kite totemic group of Kantigach has Panjabhai relationship with Muduli title group of sun totemic group of Anjar).
- (d) In all or most of the cases, one title group of one village is sued to have Panjabhai relationship with similar or dissimilar title group of another village. Thus the Panjabhai relationship is always found in inter-village level.
- (e) Thus the pattern of Panjabhai relationship can be depicted as follows :
  - => It is a relationship within the same or different totemic group.
  - => Within the same totemic group or intra-totemic level it has relationship with the same or different title groups.
  - => In inter-totemic group level it has relationship with different title group.
  - => It is an inter-group relationship always outside the village.



# PANJABHAI RELATIONSHIP

## Similar Totemic Group

Sl. No.	Totemic Group	Same Title	Different Title
1.	Tiger—Tiger (7)	Muduli—Muduli	Chalan—Badanaika Badanaika—Majhi Badanaika—Kirsani Badanaika—Pujari Kirsani—Muduli Badanaika—Kirsani
2.	Snake—Snake (6)	..	Kirsani—Badanaika Badanaika—Sisa Muduli—Kirsani Chalan—Badanaika Muduli—Chalan Kirsani—Sisa
3.	Sun—Sun (1)	Kirsani—Kirsani	-
4.	Fish—Fish (2)	Chalan—Chalan	Chalan—Kadamia
5.	Kite—Kite (1)	..	Muduli—Kirsani

## Dissimilar Totemic Group

Sl. No.	Totemic Group	Same Title	Different Title
1.	Tiger—Snake—4	..	Majhi—Chalan Muduli—Naika Kille—Pamia Muduli—Changodia
2.	Snake—Sun—3	..	Sisa—Muduli, Kirsani, Badnaika Muduli—Sisa Sisa—Muduli
3.	Tiger—Fish—1	..	Majhi—Mundagadhia
4.	Snake—Fish—1	..	Chalan—Koiria
5.	Sun—Kite—1	Muduli—Muduli	-

Like Chorubhai, Panjabhai is also the most important relationship. Inter-totemic group and inter-village interaction is achieved through Panjabhai relationship.

Panjabhai's presence is important in all rituals of the Gadaba. But in Gotar festival the Panjabhai play specific roles in the Gotar ceremony. After the buffaloes are sacrificed the Panjabhai is given the highest number of buffaloes. Panjabhai plays an important role in maintaining peace and observations of rules and regulations. In Gotar ceremony Chorubhai and Panjabhai are the primary members to get in share of main buffalo. Panjabhai bring four stone slabs of which two for vertical erection and two for horizontal erection. They erect two stone slabs at Pada Gotar Muda and two at 'Sadar' in the honour of the dead.

On the second day of marriage the newly acquired bride assists Chorubhai in preparing Charubhata (Sacred rice). Then food is served to all the relations. Afterwards Panjabhai plays an important role by asking some doubtful questions regarding the bride and her family. The members try to give adequate answers. It is a tradition that unless the questions are solved nobody takes the food. When Panjabhai stops asking questions then only all the members take their food.

The relationship of Panjabhai may break. If one group makes their Gotar and give buffaloes to their Panjabhai and if Panjabhai never do Gotar and do not give buffaloes then the Panjabhai relationship is broken.

## 5. MAHAPRASAD RELATIONSHIP :

A Mahaprasad relationship is very vital and significant although it is not found having equal intensity of social bond with Chorubhai and Panjabhai. This Mahaprasad relationship is as inviolate as it is with Chorubhai.

It is a relationship between two totemic groups of the different villages. The relationship continues generation after generation. People established Mahaprasad relationship by performing a ritual in which they wear new cloth, exchange coconut, clothes,

hen, goat, pig, Pendum etc., and sit together and eat together.

After that ritual never they take the name of those people of that village who become their 'Mahaprasad Maitar'. They call each other as 'Maitar'.

Mahaprasad relationship is lost in antiquity and its origin is untraceable. A possible surmise may be drawn that when two warring groups of different totemic symbols of two villages reached an accord, they celebrated it by 'Mahaprasad' so as to make it endurable and inviolate.

Basing on 22 villages it is found that normally the tiger totemic groups has its Mahaprasad relationship with snake totemic group and vice-versa. Mahaprasad relationship of 22 villages are given below :

Tiger Snake	Tiger Sun	Snake Sun	Tiger Fish	Snake Fish	Snake Cat	Snake Kite	Total
8	5	5	1	1	1	1	22

⇒ Mahaprasad relationship is always between two different totemic groups.

⇒ This relationship is established always outside the village.

Mahaprasad relationship is most important link in the social aspect of Gadaba life. Their presence is very important in marriage, death and Gotar festival. When a person meets a member of his Mahaprasad village in any place he gives respect to him. The relationship is more formal. After celebration of the Gotar ceremony, the totemic group performing Gotar would be invited by the Mahaprasad village after two or three months.

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS :

From the study it is evident that the Gadaba social organisation is very complex to be comprehended within a short duration of field work limited to Lamtaput area only. Notwithstanding this and other limitations pertaining to a broad level of conceptualisation, as you might have assessed, the presentation here in the paper is in the line of structural (Lev-straussian) understanding of the facts of Gadaba Society specially with reference to their social organisation.





Very precisely, we have taken into consideration the most important structural groups like the totemic groups, the title groups, the Chorubhai, Panjabhai and Mahaprasad groups.

Summarily it can be stated that the totemic groups could be considered as the exogamic clan groups but from the limited analysis it seems, as it indicates that very could be interpreted either as phratries forming three divisions at the elementary level in opposition to one another and other groups being variant of one or the other.

The title groups need not necessarily be interpreted as lineage groups but rather status groups relatively vertical divisions of the horizontally understood phratry/clan groups.

Chorubhai relationship strictly is established within the same totemic group whereas Mahaprasad relationship is strictly established outside one's own totemic group. Therefore, it could be assumed that the Chorubhai and Mahaprasad form the two extreme form of groups whereas Panjabhai relationship may be either found within the same totemic group or outside the totemic group. So far as these three types of relationship are

concerned understanding each one of them in relationship to the other at an analytical plane requires further rigorous study. But one thing is very certain that by understanding these three types of relationship one can have clear understanding of their social organisation with respect to the totemic group and status group composition.

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# THE PANA OF PHULBANI DISTRICT :

## A Socio-economic Profile

B. B. Mohanty

The Pana, being the numerically the largest Scheduled Caste community, are found all over the State of Orissa. Besides, they have also been enumerated in the bordering districts of West Bengal. In the Hindu social structure and caste hierarchy, for centuries, they had occupied lower positions and suffered from the stigma of untouchability and social discrimination to a large extent. Their life-style and social system have been greatly influenced by the neighbouring communities. Therefore, the Pana community living in the coastal regions show a great deal of variation in their manners, attitudes, habits, customs, mode of economy in comparison with those of the community members living in the tribal concentrated areas. In the former place, they are dependant and under the influence of high caste Hindus, while in the latter situation the Scheduled Tribe communities have given a shape to their socio-cultural life and activities.

### The Pana : Their distribution and demography :

According to the provisions of Article 341 of the Constitution of India, 93 communities have been enlisted as Scheduled Castes in Orissa. Their population in the State was 5,129,314 according to 1991 census, which accounts for 16-20 per cent of the total population of the State.

Among the Scheduled Castes, the Pana with a total population of 8,06,514 tops the list on the basis of their numerical strength as per 1981 census. The other important communities in the descending order are the Dhooba (4,18,383), the Bauri (3,36,278), the Kandara (3,16,367) and the Hadi (1,33,625). In Orissa the population of the Scheduled Castes and the Pana in particular in different Census periods are given below in Table-1.

Table-1

Population of the Scheduled Castes and the Pana in different Census periods in Orissa

Sl. No.	Census Year	Total population	Sch. Caste population	Pana population	% of Col. 5 to Col. 3	% of Col. 5 to Col. 2
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	1961	17,584,884	27,40,898	6,82,126	3.43	11.79
2.	1971	21,944,415	35,18,894	6,73,427	3.06	10.32
3.	1981	26,370,271	38,62,543	8,06,514	3.05	12.86

Source : Census of India

The Table above shows that the proportion of the Pana to total Scheduled Caste population during the three Census periods has remained almost constant with slight variation. It is being 21.79 per cent during 1961; 20.32 per cent during 1971 and 20.86 per cent during 1981. Likewise, the proportion of the Pana to total population of the State has also confirmed the above trend. As during the years 1961, 1971 and 1981, the percentage of the Pana population to the total population of the State are 3.43, 3.06 and 3.05, respectively. The table also reveals that, both the Scheduled Castes and the Pana are on the increase. The decadal growth rate figures among the Scheduled Castes shows that during the period (1961-71) the rate of increase among them was 19.79 per cent and in the next decade (1971-81) the figure declined to 16.75 per cent. But, among the Pana the trend is just the opposite. The growth rate among them which was 11.70 per cent during the period (1961-71) increased substantially to 19.70 per cent during the period (1971-81).

The Pana are found in all the thirteen undivided districts of the State in varying numbers. Their concentration is very high in the coastal regions of the State, covering such districts as Cuttack, Balasore and Dhenkanal. In the district of Koraput, Bolangir, Kalahandi and Mayurbhanj, their number is much less. In terms of population concentration of the Pana in different districts, Cuttack with a population of 2,18,170 ranks first and Kalahandi with a population of 327 occupies the lowest place as per the Census 1981. Among the districts covered under Tribal Sub-plan

where the Scheduled Tribe concentration is very high, the districts of Phulbani and Ganjam possess a sizable Pana population. The district-wise proportion of Pana population to total population as well as Scheduled Caste population is given in table-2.

**Table-2**  
**District-wise percentage of Pana population to total/Scheduled caste population**

Sl. No.	District	Percentage of Pana population to					
		1961		1971		1981	
		Total Population	S. C. Population	Total Population	S. C. Population	Total Population	S. C. Population
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Sambalpur	1.89	11.67	1.82	11.68	1.59	10.42
2.	Sundergarh	2.26	23.53	1.75	22.10	1.75	20.53
3.	Keonjhar	8.46	61.11	6.96	58.08	6.96	62.39
4.	Mayurbhanj	0.92	10.72	0.54	5.94	0.54	8.28
5.	Balasore	5.71	30.76	4.98	27.40	4.98	27.81
6.	Cuttack	5.03	28.73	4.71	25.54	4.71	26.68
7.	Dhenkanal	10.73	59.03	9.11	57.96	9.11	57.60
8.	Phulbani	10.75	56.67	11.55	58.54	11.55	62.30
9.	Bolangir	0.005	0.03	0.034	0.10	0.034	0.22
10.	Kalahandi	0.034	0.18	0.024	0.11	0.024	0.15
11.	Koraput	0.36	2.90	0.13	0.87	0.13	0.98
12.	Ganjam	2.14	13.03	1.36	12.07	1.36	12.43
13.	Puri	1.84	13.36	1.65	12.90	1.65	12.84
	ORISSA	3.43	21.79	3.05	20.32	3.05	20.86

The district-wise trend as revealed from the above table shows that in each of the three districts, namely, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal and Phulbani, the population of the Pana, constitute more than half of the districts, total Scheduled Caste population securing the top positions. Similarly, these above-mentioned districts are also ahead of others in terms of their respective percentage of Pana population to total population. The other three districts namely Koraput, Kalahandi and Bolangir occupy last position in respect of both these yard-sticks.

The sex-ratio among the Pana was to 979 (females per thousand males) during the 1981 Census as against 988 of the Scheduled Castes and 981 of the total population of the State. It has shown a declining trend from 1961 onwards, from 1018 during 1961 to 987 during 1971 and 979 during 1981.

The percentage of literacy among the Pana was 22.14 as compared to 22.41 for the Scheduled Castes and 34.23 for the total population of the State according to 1981 Census. The growth of literacy among them shows that during the period (1961-71), the percentage of literacy has increased from 12.01 to 15.71 registering an over-all increase of 3.70 per cent. In the next decade the growth registered a faster rate almost double the rate of previous increase.

In this paper an attempt has been made to describe the socio-economic life of the Pana of Phulbari district basing on the data collected from two villages.

### The Study Villages :

In the district of Phulbari, two villages namely Dindiragaon and Khajuripada, which come under the administrative boundary of Phiringia block were selected for collection of data. These two villages lie close to the Phiringia urban centre and contain a sizeable Pana population.

The village Dindiragaon is situated at a distance of 3 Kms. from Phiringia by the side of the all weather pucca road that connects Phulbari with Baliguda. The bus-stop is located near the entry point of the village in front of the Primary School. The village is heterogeneous in its caste composition and has three hamlets namely : Dindiragaon, the central hamlet and the main village, Nedi Sahi and Gambhiriguda. While the former two hamlets lie close to one another forming a compact settlement, the latter is situated at a little distance. In between the main settlement and Gambhiriguda hamlet, there runs the paddy fields and fallow up lands.

The caste composition of the village comprise seven different communities such as : the Rana, the Khandayat, the Gauda, the Teli, the Kandara, the Pana and the Ghasi distributed in 125 households. The hamlet and community-wise number of households are given below in Table-3.

**Table-3**  
**Hamlet-wise households/Caste composition**

Sl. No.	Hamlet	Caste Composition	No. of Households
1	2	3	4
1.	Dindiragaon	Rana, Khandayat, Gauda Teli, Kandha, Pana.	76
2.	Nedi Sahi	Kandha, Pana.	26
3.	Gambhiriguda	Khandayat, Gauda, Kandha, Ghasi	23
Village		All caste groups	125

The community-wise composition of households shows that out of the total 125 households, the Pana with 52 households are the most dominant group followed by the Kandha (34 households), the Khandayat (19 households), the Rana (9 households), the Gauda (6 households), the Ghasi (4 households) and the Teli (1 household) in the descending order.

The settlement pattern of the village does not conform to any shape and size. However, each of the caste groups have preferred to construct their houses adjacent to one another at one place forming a compact block and for maintaining their separate identity. Of the three hamlets, the houses in the Gambhiriguda hamlet lie scattered here and there on either side of the Phulbari-Baliguda road and in the Dindiragaon/Nedi Sahi hamlets the houses are constructed over a gentle slope of a hill. Therefore, in case of the latter, the undulating nature of the terrain has not facilitated to work out a definite plan for the settlement. Sometimes, the houses lie close to one another forming rows on either side of the street facing each other conforming to linear pattern and in some other cases lie scattered. The kitchen garden is either located in front or back or any other side of the house depending upon availability of the space.

Among the infrastructural facilities, the village has one upper primary school established in the year 1902, and one Anganwadi centre having recently started, both the institutions occupying one campus. Besides, being a roadside village, domestic electric connections have been provided to the inhabitants. As many as ten drinking water wells consisting of six tube-wells and four masonry wells have been provided in the village. Besides, two households, one each belonging to the Kandha and the Khandayat communities have taken telephone connections. Among the religious institutions, the village has three *Bhagabat Mandaps* and one Shiva temple located in different hamlets. An youth club having 112 members belonging to both the Pana and the Kandha communities has been started functioning in the village since the year 1913.

The other study village, Khajuripada, is located at a distance of half a kilometre from Tharingia. The village has three hamlets, namely, Khajuripada, Nuasahi and Binghiripada. The Nuasahi hamlet is exclusively inhabited by the Pana community and the Binghiripada hamlet by the Kandha community. The main hamlet, Khajuripada, being multi-caste in composition contains the Pana, the Kandha and the Gauda communities, but each of these group live in separate wards. Approximately, the village has 104 households, of which 52 belong to the Pana, 50 to the Kandha and one each to the Kandha Lohora and the Gauda families.

Among the educational institutions, the village has one U. P. School established since the year 1963 and one Anganwadi centre opened recently. There are three tube-wells located one in each of the hamlets and two masonry wells one each in Nuasahi and Khajuripada hamlets. Besides, some households belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities have been provided with domestic electric connections. There is a *Bhagabat Mandap* in the main hamlet where God 'Nrusimha' is worshipped.

#### Demographic features of the Pana community in the Study Villages :

In the two study villages, the total number of the Pana households covered are 104 having a total population of 419. The basic demographic statistics of the Pana population covered are given below in Table-4.

Table-4  
Basic demographic statistics of the Pana in two study villages

Sl. No.	Demographic features	Study villages Dindiragaon	Khajuripada	Total
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Total Pana households	52	52	104
2.	Total Pana population	220	199	419
3.	Percentage of male population	50.5	50.7	50.6
4.	Percentage of female population	49.5	49.3	49.4
5.	Percentage of child population (0-14 age group)	43.2	30.7	37.2
6.	Percentage of working force (15-59 age-group)	50.9	62.8	56.6
7.	Percentage of aged population (60+ age group)	5.9	6.5	6.2
8.	Sex-ratio	982	970	976
9.	Percentage of married population	49.5	54.8	50.1
10.	Percentage of literacy	59.4	51.3	55.6
11.	Household size	4	4	4

The above table which is self-explanatory gives a comparative picture of certain demographic features of the Pana community in two study villages. The table shows that respect of certain items like male population, working force, aged population and married population the village Khajuripada has recorded higher percentages than the corresponding figures of village Dindiragaon. In respect of other items the village Dindiragaon depicts a better picture.

### Social Life :

Due to very scanty literatures available on the community, which are more or less area/region specific it is very difficult to trace the origin and history of the Pana in concrete terms. Russell & Hiralal (1975) equated them with Panka, a dravidian caste of weavers and labourers of Mandia, Raipur and Bilaspur. Risley describes them as, "a low weaving, basket-making, and service caste", known by different names like, "Pana, Panwar, Panr, Pab, Panika, Chik-Baraik, Baraik, Gonda, Mahato, Sarasi, Tanti" on different regions of Orissa State (1891 : 155). Further, Mishra (1992) is of the opinion that the Pana of coastal districts and the Gonda of the Western districts of Orissa are one and the same. Referring to the meaning of the word 'PANA', he writes, "it is the most despised, low, polluted and stigmatised word in Orissa Language". (1992 : 25)

Risley (1891) has mentioned about five sub-castes of the Pana in Orissa. They are (1) ORH-PAN or URIYA-PAN, sprung from the liaison between a Pan woman and a number of lower Oriya castes who claim a higher social status than the Pana of the original stock; (2) BUNA-PAN, those weave cloths; (3) BETRA-PAN or RAJ-PAN, who are basket-makers, cane workers, musicians and syces and chowkidars ; (4) PAN-BAISTAB, those officiate as priests and; (5) PATRADIA, those live with the Kandha tribe as weavers and perform a variety of servile functions for the Kandha.

The Pana community belonging to districts of Phulbani, who live side by side the Kandha, the numerically largest Scheduled Tribe

community of the district as well as the State, reveal a different socio-cultural pattern and behaviour quite distinct from their counterparts who live in the coastal and northern regions of the State. Because of their long occupation in the territory and intimate relationship with the Kandha tribe they are popularly known as Mala Pana or Kandha Pana forming an endogamous group. According to informants of the study village, the Pana of Phulbani district are internally divided into as many as thirteen Clans/Bansas which are exogamous. These are, Mahananda, Bhoina, Tandia, Dipa Dohara, Bibhara, Bagha, Khura, Rana, Puda, Gundia, Suna, Tagdalia and Luhar. The members of the community belonging to different clans use various surnames suffixed to their names such as, Digal, Sethi, Naik, Behera, Sahani, etc. In the village Dindiragaon out of the total 52 Para households, as many as 35 families belong to Mahananda Bansa, 16 to Bhoina Bansa and one to Sahani Bansa. They speak Oriya as their mother-tongue and can also speak Kandha language fluently. In their dress and style of ornamentation, they resemble that of the local caste Hindus.

Among them, the size of family is small confirming more or less to nuclear type. The girl after marriage lives with the husband in the latter's village. During the days of British rule and even some years after that child marriage was in vogue in their society. This practice has since been abandoned and now-a-days adult marriage is the rule which is settled through negotiation and mutual consent. In their society clan/Gotra exogamy is the rule, but the practice of village exogamy is not strictly followed. They practise both monogamy and polygamy in the form of Polygyny, the former being largely practised and held ideal. They also perform lavirate and sororate when situation necessitates.

In the regular marriages, a mediator (Kandaria) is appointed to settle the marriage proposal. Then, through several visits and exchange visits between both the parties, the amount of bride-price to be paid and the date of Saverkar are fixed. The custom of payment of bride-price seems to be a borrowing from the

Kandha culture, as this tradition is totally non-existent among the Pana of coastal areas.

Final rituals of wedding takes place at the groom's house and the bride while coming brings with her gifts for the groom which may include cycle, watch, new clothes etc. However, the amount of bride-price and the type of gift articles for the groom are determined according to paying capacity and economic condition of the concerned families. The caste priest belonging to their own community performs all the customary rituals like enchantation of *santus*, *hawa* and performance of *bastaganlei* etc. Finally, with the *Bandapana* made by women, the newly-weds get social recognition as husband and wife. On the occasion of marriage, the overwhelmed father of the boy arranges a grand feast for the villagers, guests and relatives with non-vegetarian dishes. After marriage the married women use vermilion and wear conch shell bangles. Divorce is permitted, and in case the woman goes away she returns the bangles (*Sankha Chudi*).

The life-cycle rituals concerning birth and death observed by the Pana of Phulbani district resemble that of the local Oriya communities without any striking difference. The lineage members observe birth pollution for 21 days. They perform *Sasthi* on the sixth day, *Banarata* on the twelfth day and *Ekoisa* on twenty-first day when the child is named in consultation with the astrologer (*Nahaka*). The dead bodies are generally cremated in their own cremation ground located at a distance from the village. The important activities connected with death obsequies are *Mukhagni* by the eldest son, *Pita Kiba*, *Dassah* and *Ekadassah*. The period of pollution extends over 12 days which is observed by all the lineage members.

The Pana of Phulbani district profess Hinduism and worship Hindu Gods and Goddesses. But due to their long association with the Kandha, they have adopted certain tribal customs like animal sacrifice as a part of their religion. They also observe *Nuskha* (ceremonial eating of a crop for the first time in a year) for paddy crop which is a tribal custom, but followed widely in the district more or less

by all communities. The religious headman is called *Debari*, who belongs to their own community and his post is ascribed. They worship *Brandabati devi* and *Nrushingha Devta* in the *Bhagesht Mandap* almost everyday. Besides, all festivals in the Hindu calendar are observed by them.

At the village level, they have their traditional caste council consisting of *Savapeti*, the headman; *Tahalia*, the messenger and the *Bhandargaria*, the treasurer. The council settles all intra-village social disputes and such other conflicts which endangers group solidarity and lead to factions. The common place of meeting is the *Mandaphar*, where they often congregate to discuss matters of mutual interest and relating to village development.

### Economic Life :

The Pana, being a numerically large and widespread community pursue a varieties of occupations mostly in the nature of rendering services to higher caste groups. Earlier accounts and historical records reveal that they were 'drummers' and workers in the tea gardens of Assam.

In coastal regions of the State, their occupation was drum beating and basket-making. Besides, they were rendering *bethi* (free services) before the *Zamidars* on different occasions and employed as village *Chowkidars* and as *kalis* on annual wage contract basis. Now-a-days, they have given up their traditional pursuits to some extent and practising mostly wage-earning and share-cropping. Singh (1995) states that the Pana of Orissa have been traditionally "serves to land owning communities besides being some of them are engaged in service, business, daily-wage labour, cultivation and as musicians." According to 1981 census, 35.57 per cent of their total strength are workers, males constituting 58.06 per cent and females 12.58 per cent. Among the workers about 84 per cent are mostly agricultural labourers with very few of them as agriculturists. The remaining are engaged in sundry services and household industries.

According to Risley (1891), the Pana who live in the Kandha country, "work as weavers



and perform for the Kandhas a variety of servile functions. The group seems also to include the descendants of Panas, who sold themselves as slaves, or were sold as Meriahs or victims to the Kandhas. He further writes that, "We know that an extensive traffic in children destined for human sacrifice used to go on in the Kondh country, and that the Panas were the agents who, 'sometimes purchased, but more frequently kidnapped, the children, whom they sold to the Kondhs, and were so debased that they occasionally sold their own offspring, though they knew of course the fate that awaited them'. But at the passage of time, Meriah sacrifice has been stopped and with the availability of cheap mill-made cloths in the Kandha country, the practice of weaving by the Pana has considerably slowed down.

At present, the main occupation of the Pana in Phulbani district is wage-earning both agricultural and non-agricultural. According to the survey conducted in the study villages, it is found that out of the total 104 Pana households, 61.5 per cent are engaged in wage earning, 9.6 per cent each in business and service, 7.7 per cent in cultivation, 5.8 per cent in carpentry and masonry and 2.9 per cent each in weaving and forest collection.

The Pana are mostly landless. The households having land in study villages constitute only 2.3 per cent, each having land below 2.5 acres. Therefore, the practice of agriculture does not constitute to be the main stay of their economic life. Both men and women resort to wage earning and the types of work they perform include ploughing, transplanting and harvesting etc. Under the present system of wage-rate, a male labourer gets 4 tambis (1 tambis = 1 kg. of paddy) paddy with food served once per day or 5 tambis paddy without any food for all types of work connected with agriculture other than ploughing. For ploughing a wage earner gets 5 tambis paddy for half a day work. A woman labourer gets less wage than the males for similar type of works. Besides, they also work as labourers under local contractors in different construction works and other Government sponsored programmes. Among them some of

them have turned to become skilled masons and few others have learned the techniques of brick-making. A few households among them are found to be practising weaving of cloths in their own handlooms as a matter of practice of continuing the traditional family trade than with a motive of earning a substantial profit. The clothes woven are sold in the weekly market for cash. Further, a section of the community members have taken to business of domesticated cattle, minor forest produce, other agricultural cash crops, clothes and dry fish. Among the section of the community members who carry on business and are employed as skilled workers earn more than the ordinary unskilled labourers and as such maintain a better standard of living.

According to the survey conducted to assess the extent of income from different sources, it is found that about 82 per cent of their total income is derived from wage earning and business, wage constituting 55 per cent and business 27 per cent. Income from forest collection occupies third place which accounts for 10 per cent of their total income. Income from agriculture constitutes only 2 per cent of the total income. Earnings from other sources like animal husbandry, hunting and fishing, service to other castes etc. constitute the rest 6 per cent of the total income. The per capita and per household income among them are found to be Rs. 2299 and Rs. 9265 respectively.

Most of the Pana households have borrowed loans from local money-lenders and Government financing agencies to meet the consumption need, social obligations of the family and to carry out business. On an average the loan per household comes to Rs. 2390 among the surveyed population.

In the caste hierarchical ladder the Pana occupy a lower position than the clean castes and the Kandha, but claim to be superior than the Ghasi, another Scheduled Caste community of the village. Although they enjoy inferior status then the Kandha, yet the relationship between the two communities are very close and intimate which is based on reciprocal help and brotherhood. The Pana provide the Kandha with a series of services both in socio-economic

and religious spheres, some of which are not only deep rooted but also have become the part and parcel of the custom of both the communities. The Pana inhabiting this region, because of their number and dominance, intelligence, better economic standard and educational level, supremacy in trading activities, intimate relationship with the Kandha (The dominant Scheduled Tribe Community), do not suffer from the stigma of untouchability and social discrimination to that extent as their brethren experience in other regions of the State.

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# THE TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF THE DONGRIA KANDHA OF ORISSA

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The Dongria Kandha is one of the major sections of the numerically preponderant Kandha tribe of Orissa. They mostly inhabit the Niyamgiri hill ranges, situated in Bissamcuttack and Munigada C. D. Blocks of Gunpur Subdivisions and Kalyansingpur C. D. Block of Rayagada Subdivision in Rayagada district and Biswanathpur area of Lanjigarh C. D. Block in Kalahandi district. Their habitat is confined to a rectangular forest area situated at a height ranging from 1000ft. to 5000ft. above the sea level. The Dongria Kandha villages are found on the top of hills, spurs and base of hills. Since they live in the hills, they are called by the local plainmen as the Dongria (the hill dwelling) Kandha. They speak a Dravidian tongue, known as 'Kuv' which is an admixture of 'Kui' and 'Telegu'. Their unique characteristic features and rich cultural heritage distinguishes them from the neighbouring tribes and non-tribal groups. Their distinctiveness is revealed specially from their dress style, mode of living, indigenous skills and technology, cultural pattern and social system. They claim themselves to be the descendants of the Niyam Raja, their legendary ancestral king. This belief binds them together and keeps their social affinity undisturbed. They are an endogamous group and follow clan exogamy. In recent years, some of them have acquired wives from the neighbouring Desia Kandha community whom they consider as their brothers.

One of the striking characteristic features of the Dongria Kandha is their strong belief in the supernaturals. They attach importance to group solidarity and ensure it by their sincere

devotion to numerous gods, goddesses and spirits. They like hard work and derive pleasure by performing dance and music in their leisure time. They believe in magic, witchcraft and sorcery. In their society, the division of labour on the basis of age and sex is clearly defined and unity among clans groups is quite strong. The elders are respected and obeyed by the juniors.

The Dongria Kandha have relationship with the local Scheduled Caste people who either live in Dongria Kandha villages or in nearby villages. They mostly act as middlemen between the Dongria Kandha and outsiders for several purposes. The Scheduled Caste communities maintain a symbiotic relationship with the Dongria Kandhas. The Scheduled Caste people usually purchase the fruit orchards and trees of the Dongria Kandha in a lower price and make a good profit by selling the produce in the local market at higher price. They serve the Dongria Kandha as messengers, cattle herders and sweepers of the village. In certain villages, Scheduled Caste people are given land by the Dongria Kandha for cultivation but being tenants they can't have ownership right on the land.

The Dongria Kandhas are lover of beautiful arts and crafts. They adorn their body with various types of ornaments. Their customs also deserve special mention, because of socio-cultural importance. The male members also adorn their body with jewellery items and keep long hair like the women folk. The male members put on two nose-rings whereas the females put on three nose-rings. The excellent embroidered cloth with beautiful needle-work reveals the indigenous artistic talents of the Dongria Kandha women. Accordingly, the male members also put on a long narrow piece of cloth round the waist with its embroidered ends, one hanging in the front and the other at the back.

The Dongria Kandha villages are situated amidst hills and forests of the Niyamgiri hill ranges. Throughout the year, the area looks green and picturesque. Due to lack of proper communication, many of the villages remain away from the mainstream of the civilisation. All over the hills here and there, one can look at cleared patches without any vegetation

ready for slash and burn type shifting cultivation which is not only an age-old practice but also mainstay of their subsistence economy. Apart from all these, there are plenty of pineapple, banana, lemon, orange and other plantations as well as jackfruits and mango groves found throughout the area. Adjacent to the villages, sago-palm trees not only add to the scenery but also provide the most favourite traditional drinks to the Dongria Kandha.

The Dongria Kandha shift their settlement sites from one place to another within their Mutha boundary. The reasons behind this migration are, natural calamities, drought, outbreak of cholera and smallpox, loss of cattle wealth and frequent danger due to evil spirits. If there are repeated mishaps in a settlement site, it is considered inauspicious and villagers select a new settlement. Depletion of forest creates a lot of problems and in the long run it may become difficult for their survival. Inter-clan or inter-clan feuds are also some of the causes responsible for migration of some households from one place to another. Sometimes newly married couples also leave for new settlements to establish their new households separately. There are several instances where some people come to stay in the villages of their close relatives. Sometimes the sons-in-law also go to live with their fathers-in-law. On special ground, one can live in the village of his maternal uncle or sister's husband villages or ritual friends who usually offers him some land for cultivation and raising plantations. Sometimes due to maladjustment, the Dongria Kandha prefer to shift to other settlements irrespective of any kinship affiliations.

Each Dongria Kandha village has the institution of youth dormitory. It is the centre where unmarried girls spend their leisure hours. The number of dormitories varies according to the villages. Boys from other villages belonging to different clans visit the girls dormitory and spend nights with the girls. The dormitory is the place where a girl socialises herself with the community living, social norms and cultural values. The boys and girls also get chance to interact with each other for choosing their life partners. The dormitory

is the cultural centre for various activities of the boys and girls. By and large, it is a place for dance, merrymaking, enjoyment and learning things that becomes useful in future.

Like the girl's dormitory in every village, there is a community house popularly known as the 'Sadar'. The house is constructed on communal labour and co-operation and here community level matters are discussed. Entrance to this house is strictly prohibited for women.

The Dongria Kandha have an intimate relationship with their forest. It provides them materials for construction of their houses. It serves as the major source of food and other essential consumable items. They collect a variety of mushrooms, tubers, roots, stems, green leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds from the forest for their consumption. The forest is the place where their gods, goddess, and spirits live. One cannot think of a complete life of a Dongria Kandha without forest.

Apart from forest they also depend on land for their survival. Their cultivable lands can broadly be classified into three categories, viz. Dongar, i.e. the hillslope land for shifting cultivation where they grow pineapple, citrus plants, banana, turmeric, ginger, and varieties of other crops. Next comes Bhata type of land which is situated at the base of the hills and are comparatively more fertile than the Dongar land. In Bhata land they mostly take up wet cultivation. The third category of land is the kitchen garden, locally known as Bado which is kept more fertile by manuring and it is mostly used for growing different types of vegetables. These soil type of the area is red stony, clay and in some places patches of black soil and red soil are also noticed.

Marriage among the Dongria Kandhas is an expensive and a complex affair. It is very difficult to acquire a life partner. It involves a lot of risks and responsibilities. The selection of mate, followed by negotiations, bringing the bride home and leading a happy conjugal life give rise to a number of ceremonies and rituals. The prolonged inter-group hostility, involvement of risks, tensions, humiliations, frustrations, physical pains, and mental torture are some of the negative factors which

sometimes lead to fatal consequences. At the same time, the hospitality, comforts, pleasure, interaction and group activities are the positive aspects of marriage, which binds not only two persons of opposite sex but also two different groups and strengthens inter-group relationship. The Dongria Kandha tries to maintain internal solidarity by establishing balanced marital alliances. Although clan exogamy is given priority attention practice of village exogamy is also strictly observed.

In the Dongria Kandha society, the family is the smallest basic social unit. There are simple as well as compound type of families which are either monogamous or polygamous. There are also instances of joint and extended families where several brothers live together with their spouses and children under the care of grand parents. Many Dongria Kandha males prefer to have more than one wife because of economic necessity. Since they are shifting cultivators, they need more manpower and it leads to acquire more than one wife. It is noticed that the co-wives live together with the husband and undertake household and field activities on a co-operative basis. After the death of the husband, the sons of co-wives sometimes quarrel among themselves for partition of paternal property and it often leads to fatal consequences.

Beyond family and lineage there are larger agnatic descent groups, called *Punja*, the maximal lineage. The names of the *Punjas* are *Mandel*, *Bismajhi*, *Jani* and *Pajari*. Each maximal lineage is divided into higher *Punja* or the senior *Punja*, and lower or junior *Punja*. Each *Punja* has its own traditional roles and functions. The community level magico-religious functions are conducted by the *Janipunja* assisted by the *Pujari Punja*. The Secular functions are taken up by the *Mandel Punja*. The *Punjas* are further subdivided into lineage groups. Above the *Punja* or maximal lineage, lies the largest descent group, clan, locally known as *Kuda*. It has linkage with the traditional *Mutha* system.

*Mutha* is a territorial organisation and all the kinsmen belonging to a *Mutha* behave as a corporate group. All the members of a particular clan (*Kuda*) live within the

boundary of a particular *Mutha* and all of them are identified by a common name. Each clan (*Kuda*) has social significance and its own origin myth. Among different *Mutha*, mention may be made of *Jakesika*, *Menika*, *Mandika*. The people of *Niska Mutha* occupy the top position in their social hierarchy. They have direct link with the *Niyam Raja*, the mythical ancestor of the tribe and they abstain from eating beef to maintain their ritual purity.

At the time of hunting, if the game animal is wounded by the members of one clan and killed by another clan, it is expected that the clansmen who have wounded the animal should get back the body of the dead animal. The violation of such custom leads to clan feuds and the offender pays heavy fine to settle the dispute.

The clan plays quite vital role in possession and utilisation of land and forest which are two very important productive assets of the Dongria Kandha. Each clan (*Kuda*) has its own territory well demarcated from all sides. The clans belonging to *Mutha* have absolute rights over their respective territories. Each *Mutha* is composed of clans and each clan of several villages, the number of which vary from one *Mutha* to the other.

The *Mutha* territories are locally called, *Padar* and named after specific clans. When members of another clan live in the village of the founding clan, the former are expected to observe certain formalities. The people of the other clans can participate in all communal feasts and festivals of the village. They are allowed to fetch firewood for cremation of dead, because it is mandatory that all the households in the village are required to give firewood for the purpose. They can use the common land, pasture, forest, dancing ground, community centre, mango grove, tamarind trees and any other communally owned resources. But they cannot have the right to sell, lease out or transfer the lands which is prerogative of the *bona fide* members of the founder clan who enjoy exclusive rights of ownership of the village by descent and inheritance.

The women have no right over her husbands property, only she can work and enjoy. Women are considered to be assets of the family.

Sometimes the daughters raise some orchards and sell it out to earn their pocket money. The property goes to the son and is equally divided among the brothers. They sell and purchase land by conducting a ritual and never claim the property once sold. The Dongria Kandhas also mortgage cultivable lands, fruits, trees and animals. The men and women in an organised group help each other at the time of need and hardship. The dormitory girls traditional labour co-operative helps the needy households of their village in plantation, weeding, hoeing, sowing, bunding, harvesting and other such works.

Their kinship network is broad based and extensive. Other than the consanguinal and affinal kinship, they have ritual kinship ties. It is a very common practice among the Dongria Kandha that two persons of the same sex establish ritual kinship. The males, address their ritual friends as 'Sai' and the females address as 'Ade'. As per the tradition, a formal ceremony takes place in which both the friends take food from the same plate and since then their ritual friendships gets social approval. Some Dongria Kandhas also establish ritual friendship with the local Scheduled Caste people and others, belonging to same age-group.

The Dongria Kandha presents gifts to and accepts gifts from kinsmen and ritual friends. Within kinship network, it has been determined what kind of gift is to be given and expected in return. The forms of gift varies from a number of buffaloes to some chickens and few pots of sago-palm juice. It brings unity and solidarity among members of various clans and lineages. The exchange of gifts sometimes determines the relationship between two individuals and groups.

A Dongria Kandha person acquires different names during his lifetime. Starting from the very childhood, soon after the maturity, inside the dormitory, on the eve of marriage, and when he enters into his father-in-laws house, he is addressed and referred by different name. Sometimes during old age he is also given a separate. The same person is called by the name Ratna at childhood, Chichada inside the dormitory, Kudurja at the time of marriage by the in-laws and Kangapoi in his old age.

After his death, the near and dear kinsmen are invited and they wait till the dead body is cremated. Next day the mortuary rites are observed as per their tradition and customs. The roles played by mother's brother, father's mother's brothers, members of the first descending generations, the father-in-law, and the uterine brothers, as well as close agnates of the deceased are quite significant. In mortuary rites, mother's brother and sister's son of the deceased are expected to present buffaloes. The deceased and his family expect cooked food from the neighbours. The villagers also have some roles to play in the period of crisis. The mortuary rites in exceptional cases, are observed after seven days of the occurrence of death. Before conducting the mortuary rites, the bereaved family members observe certain taboos. For purification, some animals and birds are sacrificed for satisfying ancestors and other deities. The flesh of all the sacrificed animals are consumed in a communal feast.

The Dongria Kandha celebrate a number of feasts and festivals in which, on the one hand, they satisfy their deities and spirits and on the other, enjoy delicious food items. There are certain festivals and rituals which are organised at the individual household level and some at the village or community level. At the individual household level, they celebrate Ghanta Parba, mostly feasts and festivals and participation of all kin groups including members of different clan groups. The households observe it in collaboration with the villagers and a formal meeting of all household heads takes place, prior to the celebration. According to the date fixed, quests and kith and kins are invited to attend the ceremony. In a Monday or Friday, the ceremony starts before which the host household owner thatches his house and makes wall paintings with help of co-villagers and skilled persons. For the services rendered by the villagers, for collection of thatching materials and other works, the host serves a sumptuous meal to the helper. The participation of magico-religious specialists, recitation of incantations, sacrifice of animals and birds, enshrinement of special stone by the villagers, enjoyment of special drink and eating of sumptuous meals are some of the major attractions of this occasion. The

beating of drums, singing of the songs, sacrifice of buffalo and pig in the burial ground makes the occasions very lively and enjoyable. They celebrate the occasion with pomp and ceremony in order to satisfy their gods, goddesses and spirits as well as kiths and kins with the hope of prosperity of the family members. Mostly, well-to-do households in collaboration with the villagers celebrate this festival according to their convenience and particularly when they get a good harvest.

Unlike the *Ghaeta Parba*, another very important festival i.e. *Ilaiarpa* is performed at the household level to worship household deities and ancestors. The kinsmen are invited to attend the occasion. This is an one day ceremony. At the community level, a festival called *Pargalpom*, i.e. the festival of flowers is observed in the month of January-February, specially when the villagers reap a bumper crop. They also observe sowing and broadcasting ceremonies, known as *Bichhakapami*. Besides, they celebrate *Cendepena Puja* for appeasing various spirits and to enjoy feast. The most important and famous festival observed by the Dongria Kandha is, *Kodru Parba* or *Meriah* sacrifice. It is expected to be observed at the clan level, but practically organised at the village level. According to the need and situation, a particular village celebrates *Meriah* sacrifice to appease various spirits and deities with the hope of better health and happiness. Usually, this festival is celebrated once in every five to six years and the duration may vary. The people subscribe for the festival at the household level and all the villagers get ready for the celebration of the festival atleast one year back. All the villagers equally contribute and purchase a good buffalo and the role of village messenger is unavoidable in this connection. The buffalo is first brought to *Kateinali Penna* and given a bath with turmeric water.

All the kiths and kins and other clan people are invited well before the celebration of the festival. All the villagers get ready with sufficient foodstuff and drinks. They make their houses well decorated with coloured mud. On the first day of celebration that is one day

before the buffalo sacrifice, different animals and birds are sacrificed and guests enjoy feasts. On the next day the buffalo is sacrificed by the male adults belonging to other clans and it is a taboo for the organising clan to touch the buffalo with the weapon. The buffalo is sacrificed in a fine morning and each participants from other clans is given a slice of raw flesh of the sacrificed buffalo. They return home with the raw flesh singing and dancing all the way. The festival is brought to an end after appeasing the earth goddess *Daranipenna*. In this ritual several spirits in and around the village are appraised by offering animal sacrifice.

The Dongria Kandha have their own village council to make decisions on various cases. The village council conducts its meeting at a place in the village called, *Sadar*, the seat of the earth goddess. Almost every day early in the morning the village messenger shouts loudly to call the villagers to *Sadar*. The meeting of the traditional council starts when the traditional village leaders and other participants gather there. Each member takes part in the discussion, but also decision is finally given by the secular chief. The matters that are put forth in the council meeting are related to fixation of days of a rituals, fixation of family contributions for the ritual, sharing of responsibilities to different persons and other matters. The traditional leaders also resolve disputes among persons and groups. While taking decisions, the council makes efforts to settle disputes. Sometimes, the accused is fined to offer a feast to the villagers. Heavy fine is demanded in case of sexual offences and for breach of clan exogamy rules. When the interest of the community is hampered the council intervenes. As per the custom, one has to host a feast for encroaching upon the usufructuary right over a tree in other's land. The guilty is always punished irrespective of his socio-economic status. The community interest and personal security are always safeguarded by the council. The headman belongs to the founder lineage. Some leaders among younger generation are also given due recognition in the council. However, in decision-making process the elderly persons and traditional leaders take active part. The

village leaders take all care with seriousness to uphold the unity and maintain peace in the village. The lineage leaders also have some important role to play. The role of the village messenger, who usually belongs to the Scheduled Caste community, in matters relating to settlements of deputes is very important. On several occasions, the Dongria Kandha choose to carry out the suggestions given by the village messenger. The Dongria Kandhas donot have a single political head, rather they believe in the consensus in the council. Inspite of the latest change in the politico-jural set up, the traditional leaders still enjoy the confidence of the people.

During last a few decades the development operations by the government, particularly through the Dongria Kandha Development Agency, (Kurli), Chatikona, deserved special mention. The Dongria Kandha feel quite aware of their age-old socio-economic problems. They realise that by participatory development approach and giving emphasis on natural resources and human resources development they have brought an immense change in their standard of living. According to them, they have been directly motivated to help themselves and to develop spirit of competition going on among themselves in positive direction. Now a days they are growing

orchards and food crops for cash and better living. Some of the elderly Dongria Kandhas are of opinion that the recent development strategy of the Govt. proved to be very effective and successful because of its culture and community specific approach. Now a days they are seriously thinking several times before disposal of standing crops and utilisation of hard earned money for better purposes. The great achievement according to them is control of indiscriminately mortgage of their standing crops and selling of fruit bearing trees to the traders at a nominal price. The most striking and remarkable feature of the development process is their group loyalty and group consciousness about systematic and scientific management of their environment and society.

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# SOCIAL CONTROL & TRADITIONAL SOCIO-POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE LANJIA SAORA OF KORAPUT

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Every society has developed some mechanisms of social control for ensuring regulated life of persons as its members. The mechanisms are manifested in simple forms through folkways, mores, sanctions, customs and in elaborate forms of law, backed by enforceability, authority and power structure and administration of justice. The simple society represented by the Saora is no exception to this.

Ralph Linton (1936) holds the view that, when the individuals have adjusted and organised individual behaviour either consciously or by trial and error, towards group consciousness and a feeling of 'esprit de corps', it has transformed itself into a society with some degree of social solidarity. To ensure its continued existence, the society must have some agencies of control to regulate adult behaviour and inculcate in the young the mores and folkways of the group. In simple tribal societies, kinship units, like family, lineage, clan, paratry, moiety, band or village community, inter-village organisations and the tribe as a whole has been largely responsible for the development of social solidarity and the regulation of social behaviour.

The real social group exists only when it functions as a unity. This unity comes into being when the individual members are bound by certain bonds or ties which make their lives and behaviour closely interdependent and infuse into their minds the feelings of oneness, solidarity and communal interests. The group creating bonds in the tribal society are : (1) kinship and blood ties, (2) marriage, (3) common and simple magico-religious beliefs and practices, (4) common language/dialect,

mores and folk traditions, (5) common territorial affinity, (6) common economical life, (7) loyalty to common authority, (8) common social institutions, (9) common political system and law and order machinery, (10) mutual give and take and interdependence, (11) common living, experiencing and acting together. These bonds keep the individuals emotionally attached to the community and create a common group identity that holds the members together. Some of these factors in respect of the Saora society responsible for maintaining their social control and solidarity shall be discussed in the context of the political system and law and order machinery.

To Durkheim, social solidarity is a moral phenomenon which can be studied best through an analysis of the very factor which brings about the principal forms of social solidarity and that is law or customary law. In an undifferentiated tribal society an act is criminal when it offends strong and defined states of collective conscience. The collective or "common conscience" according to Durkheim is the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society and forms a determinate system which has its own life.

The "Saora" or "Savara" are a great ancient tribe. They have been mentioned quite frequently in Hindu mythology and ancient classics, epics, puranas and various other scriptures. Especially in Orissa, they have been very intimately associated with the cult of Lord Jagannath, who according to a legendary tradition originated as a tribal deity and was later brought to Puri under royal patronage.

The tribe is called by various names such as *Saora*, *Sahara*, *Sahar*, *Saur*, *Sora*, etc and have their racial affinity with the proto-Austroloid stock which is dominant among the aborigines of Central and Southern India. They are widely found all over the Central India comprising the States of Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. They speak an ancient Mundari dialect of their own called *Sora*.

The Sora constitute one of the Scheduled Tribes of Orissa. They are found in almost all the districts of the State. But their main concentration lies in a contiguous mountainous

territory forming a major part of the agency tracts of the Eastern Ghats in Rayagada (formerly undivided Koraput district) and Gajapati districts of Southern Orissa which can be called, the "Saora Country".

Numerically, they constitute the third largest tribe in Orissa. Their total population in the State, as per 1981 census is 3,70,061 which accounts for 6.26 per cent of the total tribal population of the State. They have registered a decennial growth rate of 8 per cent between 1971 and 1981. Their sex ratio comes to 1030 females per 1000 males showing numerical superiority of their women over men. They are socially, economically and educationally backward. Their percentage of literacy as recorded in 1981 census is only 14.47 per cent.

The Saora tribes is divided into a number of sub-tribes, such as Kapu, Jati, Sudho, Jadu, Jara, Arsi, Duara or Muli, Kindal, Kumbhe, Basu, Lanja, etc. The "Lanja Saora" who are called the "Hill-Saora" by some noted ethnographers like Verrier Elwin, constitute a primitive section of the tribe. They inhabit the "Saora country" in Southern Orissa as described above. They are famous for their expertise in terrace cultivation, shifting cultivation, elaborately religious lifestyle, artistic skills for producing beautiful wall paintings, pictograms popularly known as icons and their peculiar traditional male dress-style in which the ends of the loin cloth hang like a tail at the back. The term "Lanja" meaning "having a tail" has been bestowed upon them by their neighbours referring to the fashion of wearing long-tailed loin cloth by their male folk.

Many prominent authorities like, Thurston, Dalton, Campbell, Macpherson, Russel, Taylor, Cunningham, Fawcett, Risley, Ramamurty, Sitapathi Pantulu, Munro, Singh, Elwin have written about the Lanja Saora. The most vivid account of the tribe have been given by Verrier Elwin in his famous book "Religion of an Indian Tribe" in which, he has described their complex and elaborate magic-religious beliefs and practices—that has made the tribe known all over the world.

Like their magico-religious life, dress-style, artistic talents and terrace cultivation skills, another important feature is their keenness to

maintain their group solidarity and preserve their cultural identity by adhering to the ethics, values, morals, customs and traditions which are unique. In this respect the Lanja Saora are a well-organised group. They understand the essentials of moral law. They have their own conceptions of right and wrong, good and bad. Their interpersonal relations are governed by fixed status and well defined customs which are applicable to all aspects of human social life. Their traditional society is mostly governed by their customary law corroborated by ethical norms and public opinion. The ethical percepts and norms are transmitted from generation to generation through the informal process of socialisation. They are well aware of the fact that social group depends on an orderly social life through proper observance of social norms and customs.

Verrier Elwin (1955) wrote "the ethical codification is of external actions rather than of virtues and dispositions; it is not burdensome, but exact, not heroic but meticulous and though it is unwritten, and in a way untaught, it is known to every child. It defines the limit within which one should walk and so long as these limits are observed, it is an insurance against ghostly evils. These conditions sometimes lead to a self-conscious scrupulosity, sometimes to an irritating assumption of complacency, but on the whole they help the Saora to live well".

The most important factor for ensuring social conformity is the fear of religion. Religion forms an indispensable part of Saora life. The fear of supernatural punishment acts as a powerful deterrent against violation of established customs. The only remedy in case of violation is the speedy expiation of the sin and the propiation of the slighted deity or spirit. "Punishment by the Gods is a more serious matter. All the Gods punish any diversion from the formalist path of safety; the breach of a taboo leads to almost immediate, and certainly automatic, retribution. But the greater Gods such as 'Uyungum' and 'Darammasum' are said to punish men for 'Sin' " (Elwin : 1955).

The type of law established in the Saora society is an index of the strength of collective conscience based on common beliefs and

sentiments. 'Law' according to Raddiffe-Brown (1952) is a means of "social control through the systematic application of force of the politically organised society." Citing the views of Pospisil (1971) it can be said that in the Lanjia Saora society, "law manifests itself in the form of a decision passed by a legal authority (Council, Chief, Headman) by which a dispute is solved, or a party is advised, or by which approval is given to a previous solution of a dispute. This form of law has two important aspects: A decision serves not only to resolve a specific dispute, which represents the behaviourist part played by the authority while passing the sentence, but it also represents a precedent and an ideal for those who were not party to the specific controversy. They regard the content of decision as a revelation of ideally correct behaviour".

The Lanjia Saora being a primitive tribe have no written law but have their own norms and customs supported by social and supernatural customs. There is no political bodies, law making and enforcing agencies like legislature, police, executives, judges, lawyers and courts. But they have evolved their own systems, mechanisms, institutions and organisations for ensuring social control and administration of law and justice. Their politico-jural system is not a matter of law, as we see it but of tribal customs and practices comprising the obligations imposed on the individuals to ensure conformity.

"Customary laws are traditionally established practices which are honoured automatically without outside insistence or interference. Internal force and validity of the society make them faithfully observe the customarily hallowed practices and to punish those who infringe the time-honoured traditions. It is also observable fact that the ongoing processes of social change, contact with outside agencies, changed notions of value systems cause changes in the customary laws and practices". (Goswami, 1979). The present taboo against beef-eating and restrictions against marriage by capture in the Lanjia Saora society are examples of their changing attitudes and value systems reflected in their collective conscience in respect of customs and

practices, under the changing environment of modern times.

The significance of socio-political aspects comes from the fact that a substantial part of the law functions through the political system and its institutions, and it is difficult completely to separate law and political organisation. Political organisation is defined "as the organised ways of applying force to the maintenance of ordered relations between categories or groups of people. (Beals and Hoijer, 1971). Like other societies, the political organisations of the Saora do more than dealing with conflicts involving the social order; it also provides means for taking group decisions and administering programmes. This organisation centres around an indigenous leadership which (1) command respect and allegiance of the tribes-men, (2) maintain peace and harmony among the group, (3) organise and direct community enterprises and (4) conduct group activities like agitation, raids etc.

"In the distant past when the Saora society comprised of patrilineal bands of multi-family aggregates, it might have had the characteristics of an egalitarian society. The 'Birinda' system of social organisation points to the earlier extended patrilineal band organisation. It may be surmised that in course of time, when population increased and the Saora changed from migratory to sedentary habits, villagers grew and they settled down in the villages on permanent basis." (Singh, 1984).

The Saora still have an organised political set up mostly confined to the village level. In each Saora village, there is a secular headman (Gomango/Naiko), sacerdotal headman (Baya/Karji/Jani), headman's subordinates (Mandal/Dal Behera), messenger (Barik), astrologer (Desari) and Shaman (Kudan/Beju). By virtue of their knowledge, experience, service and specialization in their respective fields in which they have been holding positions of respect and authority in the village. In the recent past, the village headman yielded vast powers for the maintenance of law and order, peace and good Government in the village. The other leaders were guardians of the cultural, religious and economic norms of their traditional society.

Singh (1984)) wrote, "with elaboration of political organisation, the egalitarian character of the society was modified. The present Saora society conforms to the characteristics of rank society". The offices of the 'Gomango', Buya, Mandal are held by the eldest male members of the respective families. The Gomango presides over the village meetings and the Buya and other leaders take active part in the discussions". Although the Gomango and the Buya are men of great influence and wield authority and power, they are not authoritarian in their decisions on problems concerning the village affairs. Every decision taken at a village meeting is arrived at democratically in consultation with village elders. In this sense, the Saora society resembles an egalitarian society. But there is a degree of difference between members of the general public and the secular and religious headman, which detracts from its egalitarian character.

The homogenous Saora village is an independent, autonomous and self-sufficient socio-political unit with remarkable cohesion and continuity. The village organisation also possesses, a well defined territory, a hierarchy of responsible and respectable aristocracy and leadership and a traditional village Council composed of family heads, called "Birinda Neti". The organisation is based upon democratic principles. The matters concerning the village are decided in village meetings held under the chairmanship of the Gomango in presence of other leaders. The meetings are attended by the family heads whose membership and attendance in the meetings are obligatory. Decisions are reached mostly by consensus and not by majority vote. Punishment for various offences consists of impositions of fines on the offender in forms of cash, liquor, goat, fowl etc. which are offered to the gods and spirits and then consumed in a communal feast.

Buya, the sacredotal head acts as a mediator between the villagers and the supernaturals. He supplicates the deities for their blessings and benevolence for the village community. Every activity of the village like the transaction of the landed property,

construction of new houses, wedding rituals, agricultural operations, detection of crime, communal festivals and ceremonies etc. are considered to be a religious affairs.

Supernatural sanctions operate the machinery of social control and play a significant part in promoting conformity with accepted moral standard of the contemporary society. The religious belief and practices exhibit two main characteristics of Saora social life. In the first place each village seems to be autonomous and self-sufficient. People show loyalty to Gomango and Buya. They believe that the spirits of departed leaders are most important. They appear in dreams and warn the ruling Gomango and Buya against any violation of Saora norms and customs and ritual practices. In the second place, the Saora style of life is believed to be sanctioned by the supernatural world and any disturbance in the regularity of their life causes anxiety and illness and invokes the wrath of the spirits, resulting in suffering, disease, draught and other calamities.

Prior to independence, the Saora areas in Ganjam district were being administered by the feudal chiefs, Kings, Zamindars, Bissois, Dors, Patros and their managers, agents and subordinate staff. The British agents occupied the area in 1766 through conquest and treaties. Each hill-tract called 'Maliah' was divided in to a number of administrative units known as 'Muthas'. The Mutha administration was functioning under a Mutha Head called Muthadar, Bisoyi or Patro. The Bissois were maintaining a set of subordinate officers namely, Paiks, Naiks, Adhikari Hudadars, Sardars etc. stationed at strategic places inside the territories to administer the area, maintain law and order and collect revenues and taxes.

Maltby's account (1882) shows that there were eleven Bisoyis in Parlakhemundi agency area. Each of them was in charge of a small fort with their small private armies who were acting as police of the region to prevent the Saoras from raiding the plains. They were collecting 'mamool' or dues from the Saoras in kinds of grains, fruits, vegetables, animals, pots and minor forest produces. They were also

implementing the barbarous custom of free and forced labour called "Bethi Paiti".

Under British administration, the Bissoyis were taken as service Inamdars holding their respective Muthas in proprietary rights on the condition of keeping the Saoras quiet. They were maintaining a number of Paiks (soldiers) and Pessaniyas armed with matchlocks and were entitled to receive mamools from the royats as their remuneration. In addition to that, the Bissois and their staff were granted with rent-free lands for their services. Their offices were hereditary. But the Bissois and their agents were tyrants and exploiters of the tribals. They were quite demanding and resorting to violence, oppression and terror if any one dares to refuse them. The Saoras were mortally afraid of these tyrants. Even today Saora oldmen remember them and their ghastly deeds with hate and contempt.

The administrative arrangement for the Saora living in Gunupur area of Koraput was different. It formed a part of Jeypore Zamindari ruled by the Maharaja of Jeypore. There were no fudal chiefs, landlords, overlords, Mutha-Heads or their agents to oppress the tribals. The Saoras were paying their taxes directly to the Government.

The Saoras of Parikhemundi area according to Elwin (1955) were "not successful in defending themselves against the Paiks, the servants of the Bissois, who come round with violence and threats and to collect one tribute for the Bissoyis and another for themselves. This results in a very wretched physical condition, and timidity and depression..... The Paiks came round like raging lions and collected dues for the Bissois (together with what they can snatch for themselves).....".

The village administration at that time was entrusted to the village level officials such as, Gomango or Mandal (secular chief), Buya (religious chief), and their assistants like Dalabehera, Barik, etc." The Gomango and the Buyas are not only the wealthiest but were also recognised in the past by the Government and used to receive an official turban which was a greatly prized possession. The Gomango was the intermediary between the Government and

the people, and it was by his orders that the villagers went to work for officials and the local lords known as 'Bissoyi'. His presence was essential at all village functions. In Koraput, he was the arbiter in matrimonial disputes and he had the final say in the allocation of rent. Where the Buya Priest, in his secular capacity, was head of a separate quarter in a village, he could be almost equal to the chief in importance." (Singh, 1984).

The term "Gomango" is synonymous with the lineage head. It also means rich and important person. The offices of Gomango, Mandal, Buya, Dalabehera and Barik are hereditary and succession is based on the rule of primogeniture. Gomango is the secular head in charge of politico-socio-cultural activities of the village and in the past he was the revenue chief at the village level serving as a link between the village and the Mutha Head or the State administration. A position equal to that of the Gomango is held by the religious head, Buya, who presides over religious functions and holds an influential position in village meetings. Besides, there is Disari, the astrologer who forecasts auspicious time for conducting rituals and ceremonies in respect of marriage, death, birth, agriculture and communal festivals.

These village officials are men of high social prestige, wealth and status. Even though the offices of the intermediaries like those of Gomango, Buya, Mandal and Barik, etc. were abolished after independence and these traditional leaders have no official status at present, the Saora continue to honour them and their role in village affairs still continue to be decisive.

Elwin (1955) writes, "The Saora recognized four different kinds of male religious functionary, each with his special duties and rewards. The Buya is a village official who performs the office of priest in most of the Ganjam villages. The Kuranmaran is the Shaman-Diviner, medicine-man and celebrant at every kind of sacrifice. The Idanmaran is an acolyte who assists the Shaman and performs menial duties at the funerary ceremonies. The Siggamaran has the duty of cremating the corpse and performing other duties at a funeral..... The official Buya, who is often

called the *Sadi Buva* (the priest who has been given a turban, called *Sadi*, by Government), is generally the head of one of the quarters of a village and in the Ganjam villages, acts as second in command to the *Gomango*. The priest officiates at the harvest festivals, and has his part to play at marriages, funerary rites and other sacrifices..... sales and mortgages of land and liquor yielding trees, partition and other dispositions of property, and divorces effected in the Council of village elders, presided over by the *Gomango* and *Buya*, by means of long and tedious proceedings, involving various religious ceremonies. In the old days the village chief and priest had quasimagisterial functions, and the authority to settle a number of criminal and civil cases and to impose fines."

Intra-village affairs are decided inside the village with the intervention of village leaders and Council of elders. Inter-village disputes relating to boundary issues, trespassing into lands and forests, trespassing of cattle, marriage by capture or elopement, interpersonal quarrels, etc. are decided in a joint meeting of village leaders and elders on both the sides, sometimes with intervention of the leaders of a third friendly village.

The general atmosphere of Saora religion is one among the forces making for a good orderly social life. Saora religion may not aim at making people better, nor it rewards or punishes good or bad conduct, but it forms the natural soil in which good human qualities grow. The general tradition of how men should behave towards the gods, emphasises the way they should behave towards their fellowmen. It is dangerous to show proud behaviours before the gods, because humility is the most ideal of human virtues. The stress of duty, the importance of hard work and doing one's share, the charm of hospitality, the need to avoid violence and lies, the priority of community over the individual, these things are not only demanded by the religion but as well by the community also through its secular customs and traditions.

The way in which the Saora institutionalism charts its discipline is by the pressure of public opinion, expressed in every

possible way and in all the time. As this opinion is inexorable, it does not ask the people to be religious but it insists that they should conform to the rules of "Esi (sins) and "Ukka" (social offences). These is no sympathy for the person who breaches them and suffers supernatural punishments. Human penalties are inflicted by the traditional tribal council for violation of customs of "Ukka". But the most dreaded penalty of ostracism or social excommunication which is used with so devastating effect by the tribal leadership and councils in other tribal communities is rarely resorted to by the Saora leaders.

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# THE CHANGING LIFE-STYLE OF THE BIRHOR : FROM NOMADISM TO SETTLED LIFE

*Shri Trilochan Sahoo*

## Introduction :

This paper is the outcome of an empirical research on development activities based on the socio-cultural life-style of a Primitive Tribe Group (P.T.G.), the Birhor. My experiences, association and participation with the development activities during the period 1987-88 to 1992-93 for the two nomadic bands of the Birhor traced in the locality of Kendumundi village and Durdura village of Panchapir subdivision in Mayurbhanj district have been discussed. My acquaintance with the mankind of this little known jungle-dwelling tribe who happens to be nomadic people, and their distinctive cultural landmarks made me enthusiastic to take up the challenge of planned development efforts as a Special Officer of the Hill-Kharia & Mankirdia Development Agency (HKMDA), Gudugudia, Mayurbhanj.

At the outset, I traced-out two bands of Birhor, one at village, Kendumundi of Karanja Block and another at village Durdura of Jashpur Block under Karanja Subdivision in Mayurbhanj district. The village Kendumundi is located at the periphery of Similipal Forest and the village Durdura at the gateway of Similipal National Park. Both the villages are facilitated with a weekly market each. There are brooks from the jungles gently flowing through the fringes of the villages where the leaf hutments (Kumbha) of the Birhor amidst thinly populated sal trees are seen in the proximity. The village forests are amalgamated with the territory of Similipal Forest.

## Life and Culture :

My encounter with the Bihores confirmed me that their life and culture are largely influenced by four vital things. They are, forest, water source, village market and peasants.

## Identity:

These simple, wandering and god-fearing people identify themselves as the Birhor, the jungleman. The other people identify or call them as Mankirdia or Mankidi since they frequently catch, kill and eat, and often sell the monkeys. The different names such as Birhor, Mankirdia and Mankidi, are found in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Orissa as well as in various census reports. Lack of rationalisation of the Scheduled tribes list, perhaps, splitted the tribe Birhor into three different Scheduled Tribes as stated above and enumerated them so in the course of different census operations.

The connotation of the (Mankidi or Mankirdia do not explain the nature of monkeys. The culture and nature of Bihores are not the same as that of monkeys. Further more, the Bihores never inherit, imitate or behave like the monkeys. Hence the names Mankirdia or Mankidi appear to be non-connotative to address the Birhor people. The mere nomenclatures used to call the Birhor people by their neighbours may not generate three different Scheduled Tribes by splitting them. The name Birhor, which their language attributes them as jungle men, is connotative. As far as our knowledge goes a comparison of culture of Mankirdias at the villages, Kendumundi and Durdura with that of the Bihores else-where do not show much variations. In fact both the Mankirdia and Mankidi are one and the same and both types are none but the Bihores (Mohanty, 1990). These people under the names of three Scheduled Tribes of Orissa, such as Birhor, Mankirdia or Mankidi share one and the same culture. As such there may be no words of logic to treat a single tribe (say Birhor) as three different Scheduled Tribes, such as Birhor, Mankirdia and Mankidi. We may thus conclude the people from Birhor, Mankirdia, Mankidi



taken together constitute a single tribal community, i.e. Birhor.

### Origin :

The Birhors are an aboriginal group originating from the same Kolarian the Mundas, the Santals, Hos, and Bhuiyans. However, they themselves believe that they are descendants from the Sun (Imam, 1986). Strangely, they are a living legend of a stage of human evolution characterised with nomadism, hunting and food gathering activities.

A man of today would hardly believe that about more than one and a half century back a group of tribal (Birhor) men in Indian soil were reported to be cannibals. In British-India the Birhors were accused by their neighbours as man-eaters. The probability of such an acquittal read like the under mentioned "Only about fifty years ago when the attention of British administrators was first drawn to this people, they used to be accused by their neighbours of a revolting cannibalism—of hastening the end and devouring the flesh of their dying parents and other relations (Ray, 1925)". Assuring me that they had themselves given up the practice, they admitted that their fathers were in the habit of disposing of the dead in the manner indicated, viz, by feasting on the bodies but they declared they never shortened life to provide such feasts, and shrank with horror at the idea of any bodies but those of their own blood-relations being served up to them. The Raja of Jashipur said he had heard that when a Birhor thought his end is approaching, he himself invited his kindred to come and to eat him "(Dalton, 1864)". However the Birhors of today refute that their forefathers ever have had the custom of man-eating.

### Cultural Landmark :

Nomadism, band life, dwelling in leaf hutments, neither rich nor poor but equality, a livelihood derived from monkey catching and Siali (Lama Bayer) fibre rope-making, hunting and forest food-gathering activities, and upholding barter system are the distinctive cultural land-marks of the Birhors.

### Language :

Ethnologically the Birhors belong to Proto-Austroloid group of people. The Birhor dialect belongs to the Munda (Austro-Asiatic) language including the Santal and Ho languages. To some extent they are conversant with the Santal, Ho and Munda tongues as they are classified under their languages. They also talk in Oriya colloquial language as the necessity demands so while transacting with Oriya speaking people. Their language, the vehicle of Birhor culture, carries no notion of rich, poor weakness and idleness. On the contrary the dialogue and behaviour of Birhors reflects the values and attributes like strength, activeness and equal status of the members of a food group as well as the tribe. Further they have no words for time and place though they refer, at times, to a particular point of time and place of their temporary settlement which they come across and this explains their mobile and uncertain habitation attributed with a distinct nomadic life style.

### Dress and Ornaments :

It is observed from their appearance that a typical Birhor man is of short statured, dark complexion on with long head, broad-flat nose, thick lip, wavy hair, loose arm and bow-like leg. A Birhor man dress with a coarse lion cloth round the waist hanging down the knee and a napkin of the same variety, around the neck hanging the two ending parts down the shoulder at the chest and back sides of the body. A woman wear a piece of short coarse cloth round the waist which hangs down upto knee and another piece of cloth barely covers her upper part, (down the neck and above the waist) of her body. Men and women often do not care to use the second piece of clothes for covering the upper part of the body. When noticed by a stranger a Birhor woman may not cover her bare breasts since they think these not as the symbol of sex but as the baby foods. The use of modern dress like saree, dhoti, pants, shirts, underwears and banian etc. are of recent intervention by frequent contacts with other culture and also forces of modernisation. The children under age of 5 are found nude and from 5 upto 10 years of age use only a piece of lion

cloth round the waist leaving the upper part of the body naked. Women from older generation tattooed around their arms, chins, nose and feet. They wore bracelets, anklets, nose and ear rings made of brass or iron. The Birhor girls pierced their ears and noses and wore in the lobes, the befitting dry sticks of wild Tulsi plant or date-palm. Women adorn their bun with flowers and leaves from jungle during festive occasions. Now a days hardly we will find the women folk of younger generation with tattoo mark and ornaments made of brass and iron.

### **Subdivision :**

Keeping the residence in view the Birhore social may be forked with two social groups. They are the Jaghis (Settlers) and the Uthuls (nomadic). The former type is not found in Orissa. They are found only in the states of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, where they lead a settled peasant life.

### **Migration and Population :**

The latter type (Uthlus) who are of wandering nature are traced in the states of Assam, Bihar, Orissa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. They are mostly move in the hills and forest tracts of the north-western region of Orissa particularly in the districts of Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj. At times, they are also seen moving in the districts of Balasore, Cuttack and Dhenkanal. As per 1981 census the population of Birhor including Mankirdias and Mankidis was 1349. The corresponding population figures in 1971 and 1961 census were 1307 and 2138 respectively. Lacking any indepth demographic study among the Birhore it would not be easy to ascertain that they are a diminishing tribe. As they are migrating in nature the possibility of their movements across different states during census operation may not be ignored. This might be the cause of diminishing of Birhor population by 831 person over the decade (1961-1971).

The scenic chotanagapur plateau is said to be their place of origin. From there they might have been migrated to different parts of Orissa and ultimately choosen temporary habitations around the hill tracts in the said districts.

Sometimes these people wander long distances in the jungle to take advantages of the seasons best crops or game, for instance the Birhor wander from Orissa to Hazaribagh district (Prashad, 1961). Often they go out of the State and come in after two to three years (Mohanty, 1990).

### **Food group :**

The Birhor divide themselves into different food groups and each food group moves from place to place in search of forest food resources and wild games to eke out their lively-hood. They tell, "we are mother-landless. Nor even we have any immovable properties. Natural forests are our food granary". The Birhor move about in small bands sharing monkeys, tracking hare, deer and other game, or collecting rope fibres for making ropes for sale, also for collecting honey and beewade (Prashad, 1961). Why do the Birhor change their dwelling place ? Here under are some answers. They seek a change of dwelling place under the following inevitable circumstances. The food resources are exhausted and short supply of Stial fibre and monkeys are noticed in the adjacent forest areas of a Tanda. The market demand of handicrafts like rope, sika, topa are diminished in the locality. A person or his family members suffer from repeated illness or meet unnatural deaths. The conflicts and cleavages among tanda members which may lead to homicide. The necessity of searching for prospective bride, when incestual relations, condensine affairs, like adultery, premarital illicit sex relations, violation of mores of the tribe become conspicuous and ex-communication from the tanda is ordered. Last but not the least, when the kinship bonds of a persons badly require his presence for observance of the rits and rituals at another tanda apart from his own at a distance place.

### **Tanda :**

The temporary settlement of Birhor is called tanda. About 50 people from 10 to 15 families compose a food group and live in a tanda. A new tanda is set up in a place close to the forest and water source as well as market centre, prior to setting up a tanda at a new place the Dehuri, the tanda priest observes a ritual for testing

the feasibility of the place. The ritual testing goes like this that the Dehuri, the religious head man of the tando, puts up three handful of sun dried rice in a clean circle shaped place washed with cowdung in the afternoon. The very next day the Dehuri examines the place and declare the same suitable, if the rices and vermilion are found intact. The frequency of change of tandas of Birhor are more in summer and winter than in monsoon. In a tando each family owns a Kumbha, the residence of leaf hut. The Kumbhas in a tando are the symbol of Birhor life and culture. The Kumbha is a pyramidal cone-shaped construction from saplings dried branches covered with fresh leaves of the Sal (Shore a robusta) trees and Siali (Lama bayer) creepers. The distinctiveness of a Kumbha is that it keeps the Birhor reasonable warm in winter, cool in summer and serves as a wind and waterproof residence during rains. The circumference of Kumbha at the ground level is about 50' and its height at the centre is 5'. It is windowless and there is a Bagdir (Door shutter of 3'X3' size) made of twigs and leaves. The Birhors get into the Kumbha by creeping through the leaf gateway. It is a single room multipurpose hut providing accommodations for men and domestic animals, kitchen and dining. In a tando each clan must have a mini Kumbha set apart at the back of the main Kumbha for the abode of the clan deity. Besides, there may have two large Kumbhas the bachelors dormitory of Birhor, in each tando. The bachelors dormitory for boys in the tando is known as Dheigla where as for the girls it is called kudiada. The boys and girls use their respective dormitories for sleeping at nights. The presence of Birhor becomes conspicuous when a scenario of amalgamation of kumbhas in a locality catches the eyes of the neighbouring people. As the latter are very much aware of the short stay of the former in the locality they try to purchase their annual requirements of handicrafts made of siali fibre at the quickest possible time.

The tando is heterogeneous in clan composition. (Patnaik & Mohanty) "Association of each tando group is based on the need for association of foodquest. The families that constitute a tando do not belong to

the same clan or kinship group. Chance or more often marital connections seems to have originally brought them together in a tando. Even this cohesion is not so strong as would appear as any family may leave its old tando and join a new one whenever it feels like it (Prashad, 1961)". Thus it is not obligatory on part of any Birhor to live with a particular food group for all time to come. They exercise the freedom to decide and join with any choiceworthy new tando. Ofcourse in choice of a new tando a Birhor prefers the merits of staying with his kith and kins both affinal and consanguineal, keeping in view the necessities of the rits and rituals associated with their lifestyle and mutual helps in adversity and distress. The composition of a food group or a tando is always limited to ten to fifteen Birhor families since large number of families adversely affect their economy.

### Economy :

The economic activities of the Birhor are primarily based on natural forest, hunting and food gathering. "Our observation of the economic life of the Birhors shows that they lead a life which is full of hazards and hard ships and below the level of subsistence. Even though they live from hand to mouth they appear to be very joyful and contented almost in every evening both the boys and girls join together and spend time in singing and dancing in accompaniment of music from flute and drum (Patnaik & Mohanty). But luxury and comforts are yet a distant dream which never turns true for them. "Their economic life is being geared and shaped by the Simlipal hill range around which most of their tandas are situated. Primarily two occupations feature prominently as substantial source of income for the Birhors one is rope making and the other is goat rearing. (Mohanty, 1990).

These naturally shy people live mostly upon trapping and hunting wild animals and birds and gleanng forest foods, and siali fibres for preparation of ropes. On the occasions of weekly village markets they are found selling ropes, catches and forest collections. Natural forest is their main source of livelihood. Pandu Nayak, the Dehuri of the tando at village Kendumundi told, "as a mother is to a child so

is the forest to Birhors. A child lives on mother's breast milk, we exploit the mother forest and it's resources like various edible fruits, roots, tubers, leaves, flowers, mushrooms, honey, wax, games etc. to keep our bodies and souls together. The foresters accused us as destroyers of forests. But we usually do not cut the trees, especially fruit bearing trees. We cut the matured siali creepers which arrest the natural growth of big trees like sal, mahul etc. On the contrary we help the trees to grow more. See, we never root out the Siali creepers but cut them leaving 3' length above the roots for their recuperation. Our main avocation is collection of Siali fibres and preparation of ropes, sling (Sikur), small baskets (topa) etc. and sell or barter those handicrafts in the weekly markets or often at villages to earn breads. We also do trapping and hunting wild games, forest foods gathering, goat and hen rearing and agricultural wage earning. Besides, we braid jute fibres supplied by the local peasants and make rope for them and barter our labour with grains the value of which do not exceeds to Rs. 10.00—15.00 per day. We are landless we move freely amidst the bounty of the nature, forest. We, all the Birhors are equal since we have neither property nor have the feelings of rich and poor.

We have observed that the Birhors are naturally shy, timid and poor but never engage in stealing, rather prefer to starvation. A Birhor keeps two or three goats and hens to meet the ritual expenses and sacrifice purposes. At times they dispose off those domestic birds and animals when necessity and urgencies demand either for purchase of clothes or breaking starvation due to continuous rains and adverse situations. At the dawn the Birhor leave their tinda for forest for food gathering and hunting and return to tinda after the sunset. Women folk generally go to the approachable forests for collection of fuel, green leaves, Siali, sal and kendu leaves, sal seeds, mahua flowers etc. They also assist in rope and other crafts making, leaf cup and plate making, weaving mats of date-palm leaves and preparation of brooms out of forest grass.

### Rope Making :

As seen from above the craft of rope making and their marketing are significant aspect of

Birhor economy. Amidst thick bushes in the dense forests the expert eyes of the Birhor easily identify the seasoned Siali creepers for harvesting good variety of fibres. The Birhor chope the siali creepers, then strip off the barks from the creepers to get the fibres. Then they collect and carry the fibres on poles on their shoulders and return down to the tinda. The next morning the workshop for the craft sits beneath the sal/mahul/banian trees. Men as well as women sit on the datepalm leaves made mat under the shade of trees, tear the fibres into the small sizes of coarse thread and then braid and twissed them to get the finishing products of ropes, slings, nets, bags and small baskets (topa). The craft activities of processing and production continue till the raw materials are finished. Then the Birhors proceed to forests for collection of siali fibres and monkey catching. A week long labours of two adult persons starting from stupendous tasks of collecting raw materials (fibre) till the disposal of the handicrafts in the week end at the village market a Birhor family's earning inclusive of cash as well as kinds do not exceed to the amount Rs. 50.00. Forest gleaning items such as green leaves, roots, tubers, fruits, mushrooms and seasonal collections of mahua flowers, sal seed, kusum seeds, karanja seeds, kendu leaves, honey, wax, tassar cocoon, resin etc. scantily supplement the earnings of Birhor. These meagre earnings of Birhor are incapable of meeting the costs of their basic needs of food and dresses. The above precarious economic conditions justify the hand to mouth existence of the Birhors.

### Hunting :

Still another significant aspect of Birhor economies is the hunting expeditions. The seasons starting from October to early part of June of a year widen the scope of hunting games by the Birhors. During the period they appear in cheerful mood with the expectation of availing animal protein, fats of the hunts and also their skins, the selling of which fetch substantial amount that provide them condiments and oil for preparation of dishes. The Birhors too have ritual worships to appease the God of hunting (Sendra Bonga) for successful huntings. The Birhors in a tinda may

have an abode of Sendra Bonga beneath three adjacent big sal trees. They sacrifice cocks and worship the Sendra Bonga annually to appease him before the commencement of Annual religious-hunt (Disam Sendra) for successful huntings. Annually they have a great religious hunt during spring season or at the approach of Summer. The hunt is performed by groups of men from different adjacent settlements.

They move in a circle armed with clubs, axes, sticks, bow and arrows and nets. They fix nets between trees, and keeps the nets wide at middle portions with the support of sticks. All the people form a semi circle and sought by beating the branches of trees and bushes to disturb the monkeys and other games and step by step slowly come closer towards the nets. The games like hares, deer, monkey etc. become tired, get confused and easily caught in the nets. The games they hunt include bear, mongoose, squirrel, deer, mole, hedgehog, hare, monkey, elk, civet, cat. The birds they catch are jungle fowl, partridge, dove, pigeon, peacock etc. They catch birds by the help of snares and catch animals by help of traps and nets.

The Bihors are very fond of dishes prepared out of monkey's meat. That is why they love monkey hunting and go to forest for the same at least once in a week. They are not only expert in monkey hunting in the forests but also skilled in catching monkey alive. Here under is a legend the extracts of which reproduced from (Ray, 1925 : 425, 427) which tells how the Bihors came to catch and eat monkeys. Hanuman, the Monkey God, came to Lanka to rescue Sita. When Hanuman first appeared within the Garh of Ravan, his men sought to catch Hanuman but failed. At length Ravan ordered them to call some Bihors as they lived in jungles and might be more skillful in catching the Hanuman. The Bihors made nets and caught the Hanuman. Hanuman asked Rama, "who will dispose of my body when I am dead?" Rama replied, "Those who entrapped you and your race". Since then the Bihors have taken eating the flesh of different sorts of monkeys and baboons. I have heard a little different story at kendumundi tanda which speaks that the Bihors are the progeny of the demon king Ravan. The Hanuman set fire in

Lanka and burnt down the houses of their progenitors. Since then they are killing the monkeys, the progeny of Hanuman and eating their flesh. They would construct their houses on the day they be able to finish the lives of all the monkey over the surface of earth.

At least once in a week a band of males except very old and sick persons in a tanda proceed to forest for monkey hunting and catching. It largely influence the food habits of the Bihors. It is the main source of getting animal proteins for the Bihors. They are very fond of monkey meat, the poor man's protein. They never sell monkey's meat but it's skin. They often sell live monkey especially the small one. During pollution period they usually do not hunt monkey. They use axes, nets, sticks and clubs in monkey hunting. After catching the monkeys they put them in the ghejma (a net bag made of Siali fibres which is specially designed to arrest the live monkey). In all hunting expeditions they worship Sendra Bonga and the process and methods of hunting is the same as that of the annual hunting except the participation of men from neighbouring tanda. The meat of the hunt is equally distributed among all the families in a tanda, even a man who does not participate in the hunting due to sickness or at the approach of very old age gets a share. They preserve the surplus monkey meat through the process of banking in the sun shine for the future use.

### Property :

As they are a band of wandering people they have no immovable property like house site, house and arable land. The limited number of rehabilitated Bihors who are now writing the above property are due to the recent developmental intervention. For most of the Bihors their property include axe, knife, earthen urns and pots, bamboo baskets, slings, nets, snares, date-palm leaf-mats and two to four numbers of goats and cocks (for few family). The assessment of Bihors property reveals that they are the poorest among the Scheduled Tribes in the Indian soil.

Depletion of forests and injunctions of forest authorities over uses of natural forests are posing serious threat to monkey hunting and

Siali rope making, the two prime sources of Birhor livelihood.

At times Birhors were invited by the forest people as well as public of other villages to kill monkeys to save their crops from damages. As reports received the Birhors had failed to kill the monkeys except a few because the technique of monkey hunting in forests had not been applicable in other area.

### Market :

Market plays a significant role in the life of Birhors. Though the Birhors' primitive mode of transaction is of barter type still weekly market plays pivot role in their cultural life. The prime importance of market for Birhor is disposed of their handicrafts and monkey skins and minor forest collections and to procure the daily necessities like rice, salt, oil and clothings and often ready made foods and drinks. The other significant aspects in attending the markets are for collection of articles for the religious worships, for getting information on availability of prospective brides or bridegrooms at other tandas, to know the plenty availability of Siali fibres and monkeys in other areas, to circulate the news of births and deaths among the clan members leaving apart in other nearby tandas. In other words the market acts as a source of information centre, helps in the economic transaction of goods and commodities and makes arrangement for the wider interacting networks on socio-religious system of Birhor.

### Social Life :

The Birhor family is of nuclear type comprising of father, mother and unmarried children. In the tandas at Kendumundi and Durdura the clans bearing names, like Hembrum, Majhi, Nagpuria, Singhkhili, Sikaria are found.

### Family and Marriage :

Marriage among different clans of a tanda is permitted. Sexual relationship and marriage among members of the same clan is tabooed. Among the marriage types monogamy is the usual practice. In both the tandas there were not a single marriage of polygyny type. But marriages of two brothers with two sisters, marriage by exchange, sororate and Levi rate

types were found. Marriages by elopement were not noticed though I had observed the negotiations of two marriages. They do not give cognizance to child marriages. The boys and girls enjoy the freedom on to choose their mates. The most significant aspect in selection of a groom is to examine his activeness, strength and ability of hunting and earning for which he has to live together with the bride's family in the same tanda. The payment of bride price (Rs. 12/ and three pieces of clothes) is in vogue among the Birhors. Clandestine sexual relations among them before marriage may be tolerable but after marriage they are found chaste.

### Religion :

In each Birhor tanda there should have three traditional elites namely Nayak (the secular head of the tanda), Dehuri (the priest/religious headman) and Dakua (the messenger). At kendumundi tanda the functionaries like Nayak and Dehuri rested with the same person where as at Durdura there were two brothers, one as Nayak and the other as Dehuri. In changing of dwelling places, social control socio-religious events smooth management of tanda life the roles of these functionaries can not be dispensed with. When the affairs is of a community concern the functionaries are not paid but for private affairs they are paid the refreshment charges like rice, bear, foods and feasts. The decision of tanda head is binding upon all the residents in all the matters except in religious events, wherein the Dehuri plays a pivot role.

The Birhors are animists. But they have a religion of their own and in addition believe in magic, witchcraft that bring them prosperity and adversity, a good life, a state of good health or sickness. Their religious system is ideational as it is based on supernatural beliefs which label the Sun, Moon, water, earth, fire, forest and other natural objects as Gods. Their supreme deity is "Sun" and they believe that they are the descendants from the Sun. They equate the spirits of their ancestors with the Gods and please the formers by offering godly treatments for their well-being. These are the benevolent gods for the Birhors. According to Birhors the witch (*Diner*), evil spirits (*Bkut*) are treated as malevolent gods.

So far I have given an account of my experiences with the life and culture of Birhors. Now I must turn to throw some light on the strategies that I had adopted in the execution of rehabilitation and total development programmes for the Birhors, and on assessment of the same.

### **Planned Development Intervention :**

According to Nehru the tribals should develop in the lines of their own cultural genius. This principle was followed in the developmental actions. The Birhors have a culture of nomadic life. Execution of development actions for a nomadic tribe is undoubtedly a difficult task. Hence keeping their culture and indigenous handi crafts in view I examined the Birhors and the natural resources available to them at the villages, Kendumundi and Durdura and came to know that the Birhors in both the tandas would be able to stay there at a stretch hardly for six months during the year 1987. To sustain their tanda lives for rest of the six months of the year there must be provisions of foods and works, especially indigenous rope making. The Birhors had also indicated their tiredness and reluctant attitudes for moving from place to place to eke out their livelihood. They also optioned to stick to a permanent settlement provided that they would have the provisions of basic needs like foods, dresses, shelters, education and livelihood.

### **Early Attempt :**

At the outset two Nursery Schools were opened during 1987 at both the tandas to win the confidence of the Birhors and initially the same started functioning in their respective leaf-dormitories. All the Birhors were illiterate. Hence one boy and one girl from Ho tribes of the said villages who were acquainted with Birhor dialect were selected to teach in the Nursery Schools. All the Birhor children from 3+ to 10 years of age were taught in the Nursery school at morning. Since the Birhor children upto 5 years were naked they instantly provide with uniform dresses and also reading and writing materials at free of cost. The adults were taught at their leisures. Besides, expectant mothers, nursing mothers

and the children at both the Nursery Schools were distributed with nutritious foods at morning after the teaching everyday. There were repeated health check up of the Birhors alongwith the supply of life saving medicines to the patients as per the doctor's advice in addition to the observance of their own traditional rituals and worships associated with the treatment of illness. The immunization as a continuous process was ensured.

### **Role of District Administration :**

After 3 months of operation of Human Resources Development Programmes (HRDP), Shri G. C. Pati, L.A.S., the then Collector of Mayurbhanj district visited the tandas at Kendumundi and Durdura. An informal meeting with the Birhor of each tanda was arranged. The effective implementation of the HRDP was reviewed and the following decisions were emerged in the meeting. The Birhors were envisaging a pitiable socio-economic condition. All possible attempts should be made to raise the socio-economic state of the Birhors and they be persuaded for a sedentary life. To achieve this goal each Birhor family must have atleast 10 cent of land for house site and kitchen garden and a pucca house under R.L.E.G.P. (Indira Awas Yojana). Distribution of ration cards and sanction of old age and widow pensions to eligible Birhors should be made at the quickest possible times. The on going HRDP should continue uninterrupted.

The district administration took keen interests and instructed all district level officials to cooperate in all the development programmes of the Birhors on war footing basis. I sincerely coordinated the works of the line departments relating to the development programmes for Birhors under the intimation to the collector fortnightly about their operational progress and lapses. Virtually I had to do the works of Birhors with the spirit of a social worker than a government officer, "service to mankind is service to god" was the motto which geared the tempo of all social welfare activities like distribution of ration cards to all the 27 Birhor families in these two tandas, extension of old age and widow pension

facilities, organisation of health camps and audio-visual programmes etc.

### Follow up action :

After expiry of six months when the siali fibres and monkeys in the adjacent village forests were exhausted the construction works of 27 houses for the Birhors were started in both the tandas and they were engaged in the construction works of their own house on payment of wages. There was a break for two days once in a week in the house construction works so that the Birhors would be able to attend their forest food collections and monkey catching as well as marketing in the village hat and thereby sustain their cultural life intact.

I always kept my self informed about the movements and activities of the Birhors since they were habitual wanderers and thus some of them might leave the tandas at any point of time. There were instance of slipping away of two Birhor families from the Kendumundi tanda for fear of immunisation and hard construction works and intrafamilial conflicts and me searched them out and brought back them to tanda after much persuasion. For the first time in their life the Birhors, at Kendumundi and Durdura tandas continued to stay for one year at a stretch and that somehow convinced me that a little more sincere attempt for ameliorating the conditions of these poverty stricken people might turn them as permanent settlers of the place.

Needless to say that all the ritual formalities were observed during selection of sites and construction of pucca houses and dormitories in both the tandas of the Birhors. Every Birhor families were distributed with one house under the Indira Awas Yojana, patta for the house sites and ration card. Besides, all the eligible old, widow, destitute women and physically handicapped Birhor persons were sanctioned old age pension and widow pensions.

During the 2nd and 3rd years of operation of development programme 11 more numbers of Birhor families were infiltrated into the tandas and thus for them 11 new houses were constructed with this the Birhors were cautioned that no provision of further

accommodation would be extended in these tandas favouring any new Birhors as the same would adversely affect their economy. In the course of their short stay for one year in both the tandas the Birhors had exploited the adjacent village forests within the reach of 5 kms. Hence the able bodied Birhors (one per family) were provided with bicycles to cover up the distance of natural forests beyond 5 kms. through the forest roads in short time. They were provided with jutes in lean periods or difficult situation @ 30 kg. per family under rope making scheme. All the heads of family of Birhors had opened savings Bank Accounts in their names and the amount of Rs. 500/- sanctioned in favour of each of them deposited under the delinking income-generating scheme of rope making was deposited in the account. In addition to this the Birhor were depositing their savings amount according to their capacity. To encourage more savings among them the Birhors were not permitted to withdraw from their accounts without the prior permission of Special Officer, HKMDA.

The other economic assistances provided to the Birhors were as follows. Two young Birhors, one from each tanda, were assisted Rs. 3,000 to run the rope trading with a view to check the exploitation of the middleman. Two young ladies from both the tandas were trained and given sewing machines to take the advantages of the weekly hats and to add to their incomes. Fruit bearing trees like mango, banana, papaya, drumstick, lemon were planted and vegetable cultivations were done in their kitchen garden and for such horticultural operations each of them were given a set of Agriculture/Horticulture implements. Sisal plantations were developed in 125 acres of land in the adjacent areas of both the tandas with an aim to generate and harvest fibre raw materials that would facilitate their rope industry. To supplement their incomes each Birhors family was given four numbers of country variety goats and four numbers of graded buck to each tanda.

Under infrastructure development programmes, one tube well in each tanda was sunk and installed for drinking water purpose and one well at each tanda was dug to water



the kitchen gardens. All the houses at Durdura tanda were electrified under kutir yoti scheme. Both the tandas streets were developed and linked with the village main roads. The HRD programmes were continued uninterrupted. The students at Nursery schools who were of 6+ years of age were promoted and sent up to nearby primary schools and admitted in their Hostels run by Welfare Department.

### **Self evaluation of development works**

The followings are the findings of the assessment of various development works taken up during three years (1987-88 to 1989-90) for the Birhor.

#### **Income generation benefits :**

All the Birhor families have had savings Pass Books and their balance amounts varies from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 5,000. This indicates that the Birhore economic conditions have been improved in comparison to their previous one. About 25 families out of 38 families were benefitted by the Goat rearing schemes which had supplement their income by additional average amount of Rs. 1,000 per family per year. The rest 13 families covered under the scheme had squandered away the animal investment due to superstition, carelessness and callous attitudes.

Most of the Birhors have reaped the benefits from backyard plantations and kitchen garden. They obtained supplementary nutritions from consumption of vegetables and fruits like papaya, banana and drumsticks that were grown in the kitchen garden. Besides, there were families who sold banana and earned Rs. 200 to Rs. 500 per family annually.

The sisal plantations provided regular jobs for four Birhors for three consecutive years. In addition to these majority of the menial works in the plantations were done by the Birhors which had generated about 10,000 mandays labour (equivalent to the earnings of Rs.1,25,000).

Free supply of jutes under ropemaking scheme gave them an average additional income of Rs. 200 per month. The other significant return from the scheme was that it helped the Birhor to sustain their livelihood in difficult situations

and when Siali fibres were exhausted in the adjacent village forests. Further the scheme had encouraged the Birhors for savings as they had to deposit the cost of jute which was acting as a revolving fund.

Of all those two Birhore, who were assisted under small business of rope trading had been benefitted the most. Always their balance in their passbooks were Rs. 5,000 and they were reported to be crossed the poverty line. Both these two families had taken mortgage of lands of other tribals and communities and also were doing share cropping in other lands.

The two young women trained in tailoring and provided with sewing machines were able to earn Rs.50.00 per week as supplementary income.

In most cases the intentions of supply of bicycle were defeated. Due to their neighbours envy and conspiracy the hope owning bicycles by the Birhors was shattered.

Forest authority at times hacketed and snatched away their bicycles when they enter into the core area of project Tiger for collection of fibres. In course of time a feeling was created that cycles were not necessary for them but luxury ones. Except few majority of them disposed of the cycles surreptitiously.

#### **Benefits under H.R.D.P. :**

Introduction of supplementary nutrition programmes initially by HKMDA and subsequently the continuance of the same by I.C.D.S. imprint a positive impact in the minds of the expectant and nursed mothers and children. Likewise free treatments and distribution of life savings medicines benefitted them much as a result of which the occurrence of diseases such as malaria and skin infection were reduced to a satisfactory extent.

Under education programme all the adults from the age group 15-35 years received informal education and were able to read and put their signature in Oriya. In the Nursery Schools 27 students were registered and reading. There were 17 students (who had received their preliminary learnings at Nursery Schools) reading in standard I and II in

the primary schools and staying in Hostels run by Welfare Department.

Audio-visual programmes on health, sanitation, education, plantation, cottage industry, fairs and festivals and entertaining films, cinemas at frequent intervals had inspired them to enjoy sedentary life.

#### **Social service support :**

The attention of Birhors towards moving to a new place after expiry of the 1st sixmonths in the year 1987-88 at the tandas at Kendumundi and Durdura were diverted by introducing supply of jutes and providing works on daily wages basis in the construction works of houses as well as in plantation works. These new job fetch them a comparatively good income and enable them to have two square meals a day and thus arrested their nomadic life.

For the first time their names found place in the voter list and they had exercised their franchise. They also availed the opportunity of controlled rice at a cost of Rs. 2 per kg. for 10 kgs. per months under the public distribution system in Tribal Sub-plan Area. The decision of old persons, especially the heads of the tandas were arrested by the alluring sanction and payment of old age pensions. Ownership of immovable properties like house sites, pucca houses, and plantation sites and movable properties like goat, bicycle, sewing machines, radios etc. bind the minds of Birhors in favour of permanent settled life. The largest attractions of women and children for sedentary life were the supplementary nutrition as well as colourful audio-visual programme that kept them entertained. Obvertly they convert their minds favouring no change of place for wherever they would go they be envisaged the depletion of forests and restrictions over them but no certainty about availing plenty of forest foods. They did not desire to leave the new rehabilitation colonies at Kendumundi and Durdura which must cause them depriving of all the Governmental facilities.

In a nutshell the economic benefits they derived, the social services supports extended to them as well as the attractions of education, health, nutrition and the colourful entertain programmes helped the Birhors to give up wandering habits and lead a sedentary life.

In order to examine the gravity of the impact of economic development programmes on the Birhors no new economic benefits were given to them although the HRDP were continued during the 4th and 5th years (1990-91 and 91-92). The aim of this experiment was to break spoon feeding, to abolish pauperism and to observe how the Birhors would manage to sustain their livelihood without the support of governmental measures.

#### **PROBLEMS :**

##### **Land identification :**

In course of the pause period attempts were made to provide atleast two standard acres of land to each Birhor family. There government waste lands were selected and demarcated for distribution among the Birhors but the neighbouring people who claimed these lands under their unauthorised occupation started revolving and conspiracy against not only the Birhors but also me (the then Special Officer). Since the Birhors were naturally shy and timid they dare not to take possession of lands at a cost of cultivating enmity with their more advanced neighbours the Santals, the Hoes and others. No lands for agriculture purpose could be distributed among the Birhors. And thus the Birhor's dream of owing lands was about to vanish. By that time collector Mayurbhanj was no more the Chairman of HKMDA and my intimation on the above issue and proposal for provision of the distribution of arable lands among the landless Birhors before the then Chairman HKDM-cum-P.A. Karanjia ITDA yielded no tangible results. I felt uneasy as I could not help the land hungry Birhors to have arable lands.

##### **Temporary absconding :**

At the same time I also equally shocked with the absconding news of three Birhor families from their tanda. I investigated the matter and came to know that two family had been to Tata area in Birhor State in search of a prospective bride. This happened as there were dearth of prospective brides in both the tandas. The third family was said to be left the Tanda for repeated illness of it's family members. The illness was due to (as they believed) the spirit of the evil ghost residing inside the pucca

house which could not be driven out despite all the ritual treatments. The man made Kumbha to stay at the tando but this attempt too, for the evil spirit, turned in vain and the family members left the tando for ever. In the Tata area the prospective groom's family, his brother's family and the prospective bride's family stay in the same tandas for six months. In course of staying together the bride's father was convinced about the ability of the groom and then the couple married and returned along with their parents and brother's family to Kendumundi Tanda.

Besides, there were other cases of the Birhors leaving tandas temporarily. There were eight to ten families who frequently left their houses from the colonies and stayed near the dense forests inside Similpal for 3 to 4 days on week for collection of fibres, forest foods and hunting and came down to their respective tandas for the rest days for sale of articles and procurement of daily necessities at the weekly market.

#### **Lack of follow up action :**

After my departure from the HKMDA the sisal fibre had to be harvested. The Birhors were supposed to be trained in extraction of fibres from sisal leaves and preparation of rope and various articles out of sisal fibres through the technical guidance of D.L.C. Mayurbhanj with a view to fetch lucrative income. But instead of arranging any training for the Birhors for improvement of the crafts on sisal fibre the sisal leaves were sold at a thrown away price and the meagre amounts distributed among the Birhors. Had they been trained and asked to produce the handicrafts of rope and rope product articles out of the sisal fibres they might have got 4 times more income than what amount they got from sale of sisal leaves. The very purpose of sisal plantation for the income generation of Birhors was shattered. This was not the end of the story. The vast field of sisal plantations after the harvesting were found with no development of suitable alternative plantations and thus kept fallow. This is a sorry state of affair as the Birhors would be left out without any possibility of alternative income generation scope.

#### **Change in administrative structure :**

The Project Administrators of ITDAs were made as the Chairman of Micro Project instead of the Collectors of their respective districts. This caused no attendance of district level officers in the Governing Body meeting of HKMDA and thus no fruitful discussions on planning and executions of development schemes for the Birhors come out. When Collector was the Chairman of HKMDA there were inflow of funds to the micro project from DRDA, Mayurbhanj and ITDA, Karanjia and integration of schemes for the total development of the Birhors was possible. The Chairmanship of P.A., ITDA produced development arrangements of less gravity.

#### **Inadequate fund :**

About 50 per cent of Grant-in-Aids received (Approximately 5 lakhs per annum) were spent on administrative expenses leaving 2.5 lakhs for expenditures on development programmes. With the meagre amount the project authority had no choice to execute the ongoing schemes in piece meal approach over successful years. The piece meal approach for all round development of the Birhors had produced the blunders of incomplete results, like a drop of water to quench the thirst of a person.

#### **Untrained staff :**

The field assistant and other field staff were not given any orientation training in their respective fields. As such their performances were not in consonance with the desired expectation.

#### **Lacunae in planning :**

Lack of planning to follow up the ongoing programmes and introduction of new one to cater the development needs of the Birhors and execution of the same adversely affected the rehabilitation schemes after my departure from HKMDA, Jashipur.

#### **Inter ethnic conflict :**

The Birhors were getting assistances under various income generating schemes on cent per cent subsidy whereas the other scheduled tribes on 50 per cent subsidy. This naturally made the

latter envious. They played conspiracy so that the Birhors would leave the rehabilitation colonies and the vacant house would be captured and the lands be garbed by them.

### **Want of evaluation :**

Concurrent evaluation had not been done as a result of which the errors in planning and execution of schemes were repeated over successive years. This is a sorry state of affairs as we are departing from the main goal of successful rehabilitation of Birhors. The post of special officer, which happens to be the team leader of the development works for Birhors, was kept vacant for about one year (1994-95). The Special Officer ITDA, Karanjia was in charge of S.O. HKMDA who hardly found spare time to look after the development works for the Birhors.

### **Injunction of other department :**

Injunction of Project Tiger authority, Simlipal Mayurbhanj Forest Department over trespassing, hunting and forest collections inside the project area have limited the scope of earning of Birhors. Their consumption of animal protein, especially from monkey's meat, and income from sial rope making have been considerably reduced. However, the Birhors have been surreptitious by catching and hunting monkeys and other games collecting forest foods and sial fibres inside the Project Tiger area. They reported before me that they were often caught redhanded for the above unwholesome activities and their cycles, nets, axes etc. were temporarily snatched away and they beaten by the forest guards and then released.

### **Reductions :**

The market demands of ropes, topas, and sikas had decreased because the sedentary life of Birhors supplied more articles than the requirements of the consumers in the locality. As a result they were forced to dispose of their handicrafts and other articles comparatively at a cheaper rate.

The Birhors were found actively engaged in wage earnings in seasonal agricultural operations and other allied works. Some of them had started share cropping with their

neighbours. Four Birhor families had taken mortgage of lands of others on annual payment of money and cultivated the land. This indicates that the Birhors are slowly adjusting with the changing situations. Thus their rehabilitation through land based scheme appear to be effective and help them to lead an impressive prolonged settled life.

Impact of development works and the new-income opportunities for the Birhors had brought forth money economy and increase of wants and expenditures.

Time to come if no systematic and suitable family-wise need based planning for development, provisions of arable lands, improvement of indigenous crafts and development of plantains fields would be done, the Birhors, who have been accustomed with staying in pucca houses and settled life be forced to lead nomadic life and once again be returned to the state of houselessness and uncertain roaming. From my recent visit to Kendumundi I observed this that the time is not far from now. "A stitch in time saves nine". Right now, if never, we may prepare comprehensive plans for the Birhors and execute the same so that the rehabilitation programme of Birhors be purposive and resolute.

### **Suggestions :**

Each Birhor family should be distributed with two acres of Government waste land without further delay. After distribution of the lands the same should be developed as arable lands. Provisions of irrigating the lands should be made and the Birhors should be provided with agricultural inputs like certified seeds, fertilizers etc. alongwith crop demonstrations. All these should be executed through the composite landbased irrigation scheme.

Cashew plantations may be taken up in the fallow lands where sial were harvested and Sial creeper intercropping be encouraged there in the fields. The fallow fields may be sought for sial plantation and the Birhors should be trained through DIC, Mayurbhanj for extraction of sial fibres and preparation of ropes and various other articles out of sial

fibres. Marketing for the goods may be arranged.

The Birhor women should be organised under Mahila Samrudhi Yojana and all the Birhor family heads should be covered under a comprehensive Life Insurance Policy as they are working in dense forest areas where there are life risks at any point of time. The Project Tiger Authority may be requested to take a liberal view on moving of Birhors inside the Project Tiger Area since it is the Prime occupation of Birhor to depend on forests, a means of livelihood.

The Birhors should participate in all the labour intensive development works on payment of wages. All the integrated developmental planning should be made by pulling funds from DRDA, Mayurbhanj, LT.D.A., Karanja and HKMDA (Micro Project) Jashipur.

The Field Assistant of HKMDA should be trained in the field of Agriculture, Horticulture and Live Stock and learning the Birhor language. Likewise all the field staff should be trained in their respective fields and Birhor language.

Government in-Welfare Department for the greater interest of primitive Tribe people, may kindly consider the reappointment of district Collectors as Chairman of Micro projects. Large districts are now splitted to small ones for effective administration and supervision of development works. Let the primitive people take the advantages of this privilege.

A social scientist should be associated with this Micro Project for preparation of Annual action plan and evaluation of schemes after end of every year so that the errors committed in a said year be sorted out prior to preparing the comprehensive action plan for it's successive year.

The allotments of G.I.A. should be placed with the Agency separately for meeting the cost of (i) development programmes and (ii) establishment charges so that the funds meant for the former purpose would not be spent for the latter.

Government Officers who is at the verge of retirement should not be posted as the Special Officer of the Micro Project and the post of Special Officer, should not be kept vacant for a longer period.

Field Director, Project Tiger, Similipal and Forest Department authorities in Mayurbhanj district may be requested to recruits forest guard and labourers meant for the Forest Project works from among the local Birhors. The qualification and age of the prospective candidates may be relaxed and they may be trained after selection.

The Governing Body of HKMDA, Jashipur may be reconstituted with the Collector, Mayurbhanj as Chairman, Field Director, Project Tiger, Similipal may be taken in as Co-vice-Chairman. Besides two Birhors (one male and one female) should be included as members.

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# SAORA WOMEN : A STUDY ON THEIR SOCIO- ECONOMIC STATUS

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Status, though difficult to conceptualize and often elusive for empirical grasp, yet its idea is essential to an understanding of social stratification, social mobility and the line. In the past, status was a juristic term connecting the individual rights and duties as relevant to him/her condition and station in life. In the 19th century social upheavals had shaken the old order to its foundation. This came with Max Weber who pointed out that status, class or income and political power are the three major dimensions of social stratification. A different interpretation has distinguished the work of Anthropologist, Ralph Linton. According to him, status is primarily a position in a social structure involving rights, duties and reciprocal expectations of behavior, none of which depends on the personal characteristics of the status occupants.

Generally, status is of two types i.e. ascribed and achieved. Ascribed status is that which is inherited, such as sex, race or ethnicity or overtime, age and is crucial to define the basic patterns of people's lives. Achieved status, on the other hand, is acquired through personal effort or chance possibly from occupational or educational attainment.

Professor R.H. Lowie has advocated for four determinants to assess the status in its multifarious dimensions. These are (i) Actual treatment (ii) Legal status (iii) Opportunity for social participation (iv) Character and extent of work.

This article deals with the socio-economic status of the Lanjia Saora women. Socio-economic status mostly determines the behavioural make up of an individual and provides an insight for him/her future success.

Therefore, the knowledge about the social and economic status of the Saora women will be helpful to the social scientists to foresee the behavior in changed conditions that has occurred after launching of different developmental programmes. It is also highly essential on the part of the planners to measure the present status of the women section which will help them to know the gap and the quantum of efforts required. The present status of the Saora women is delineated on the basis of the data collected from a Lanjia Saora village.

In Orissa, Saoras are one of the major tribes. The Lanjia Saoras belong to the primitive section of the tribe, Saora. They are found in great compactness in the Parlakhemundi subdivision of Gajapati district and Gunupur subdivision of Rayagada district. The tract stretching from Parlakhemundi town to Gumma and beyond up to Serango and the country lying with a radius of about 20 kms. from both these central places has many Saora villages which are located in the fertile valleys. The total population of the tribe as per 1981 census is 3,70,061 which constitute 6.26 per cent of the total population of the State. On the basis of their numerical strength they occupy third position among 62 tribal communities. The sex ratio as per 1981 census comes to 1030 females per 1000 males. Educationally the tribe is backward. The percentage of literacy among them is 14.47 as compared with 34.23 per cent for the entire population of the State as per 1981 census. However, they show an increase in their literacy rate by 4.32 per cent over the earlier figure of 10.15 per cent recorded in 1971 census.

The economic life of the Saoras is primarily based on shifting cultivation and terraced cultivation with occasional hunting and food gathering pursuits. The Saoras of Parlakhemundi subdivision in particular are the best terraced cultivators. In the Saora society, family is the smallest social unit and their residence is patrilocal and descent is patrilineal. Membership in the family is acquired by birth but girls after their marriage leave parent's family and stay with their husbands. The Saoras are unique due to the

absence of clan. The 'birinda' as a patrilineage has its structure and function.

Among the Saoras the women have their distinct position. They have freedom in selecting their mates. The institutions, like marriage and family bestow a significant status on them. Generally, marriage is monogamous in nature. Polygamy is also practised by the Saoras. It is mainly practised for the expansion of shifting land since in such type of cultivation Saora women work more than men and they constitute the major work force. It is a sign of prestige and prosperity on the part of the Saora men to have more women. Therefore, women help in the enhancement of the social and economic prestige of men. Another remarkable feature among the Saoras is that a woman belongs to her father's 'birinda' even after her marriage. In widow remarriage and divorce equal opportunities are given to both the sexes.

The Saora society being patriarchal, the status of women are expected to be low. But in real practice women in their society are neither ill-treated nor suppressed to enjoy a subservient position. There is no absolute dominance of man, though in theory he is the head of the household. Women have a high and honoured place in the society. The Saoras believe that growth of the family largely depends more on women. So they consider that greater sin is committed when a woman is killed than when a man is killed. A person killing a woman should offer 8 buffaloes where as 7 buffaloes are prescribed in case a man is killed. In religion also Saora women have a distinct position. The existence of female 'Shaman' called 'Kudanboi' justifies importance of Women in religious life. The Saora men also pay due respect to their women. Once someone is engaged to a girl, he should not even touch her before marriage is consummated.

So far as the legal status of the Saora women is concerned, she cannot sell properties or enter into an agreement to transfer of property rights in any manner. Of course, she can sell her personal and self acquired assets with the consent of the husband. They also

have right over certain movable properties and immovable assets to a limited extent by virtue of marriage, personal endeavour and by way of receiving gifts and compliments. Thus, though husband is the customary owner and inherits property, it is the women in the family who virtually control the family purse and play a decisive role in respect of control and management of the family assets.

In the economic front, Saora women play a more significant role. The Saora males appear to be less capable and less enthusiastic in economic activities than the females. The women are very hard-working, laborious and active. As the Saoras are shifting cultivators the help of women is indispensable to them. Cleaning the shrubs in swidden (podu) lands, manuring, hoeing, dressing, reaping, winnowing the crops after harvesting etc. are exclusively done by the women folk in addition to their household works. Even Saora women plough the terraced lands.

Thus, Saora women by virtue of their substantial economic contribution are regarded as assets to families of both parents and in-laws.

After dealing with a brief account of the socio-economic status of Saora women in their social structure, an attempt has been made to analyse primary data collected through field study to assess their present status.

The objective of the study was to find out the major socio economic problems that Saora women confront in their day to-day life.

Three types of schedules were administered for the collection of data from primary sources. The schedules are :

- (a) Village information schedule
- (b) Household schedule
- (c) Individual schedule

A sample of 111 females were selected using purposive sampling. The selection was based on age, marital status, educational standard and land holding. One female from each of the household was selected.

The study was conducted in Tumula, a village on the hills of Gumma Block in Serango P. S. of Parlakhemundi subdivision in Gajapati district of Orissa. The village is located at a distance of about 45 K. Ms. from the Parlakhemundi subdivisional headquarters.

### Demography of the Village :

#### (i) Households :

Total	111
Non-Converted	46 (41.45%)
Converted	65 (58.55%)

The village is homogeneous in its composition inhabited by 111 Lanja Saora families. Out of these 111 households 58.55 per cent families are converted Christians.

#### (ii) Population :

	Non-converted	Converted
Total	241	348
Male	103	156
Female	138	192

The population distribution above shows that females are more in number than the males, the sex ratio being 1,274 per 1,000 males as against 1,030 females per 1,000 males as per 1981 Census.

#### (iii) Education :

	Non-converted	Converted
Total literates	50 (20.75%)	153 (25.98%)
Male literates	41 (39.80%)	130 (50.19%)
Female literates	9 (6.53%)	23 (6.96%)

The above figures indicate that 34.46 per cent of the population is literate. Further, it is seen that converted Saoras both male and female show a higher rate of literacy than the non-converted Saoras. This implies the influence of Christianity.

#### (iv) Land Holding :

Marginal Farmer	107 (96.39%)
Small Farmer	4 (3.61%)
Big Farmer	Nil (0.00%)

The above figures show that majority of the families are marginal farmers which deprives

them from being economically sound through agriculture.

#### (v) Income :

Below poverty line	71 households (63.96%)
Above poverty line	40 households (36.04%)
(Taking poverty line for the rural area as Rs. 9,000)	

About 64 per cent of the families have their annual income below Rs. 9,000 which implies that they have not crossed the poverty line.

### Socio-economic Status of the Sample Women :

#### (a) Age :

Between 10-14 years	12 (10.81%)
Between 15-19 years	90 (81.08%)
60 and above years	9 (8.11%)

The above figures show that most of the respondents were between the age-group of 15-59 years.

#### (b) Marital Status :

Unmarried	36 (32.44%)
Married	62 (55.85%)
Widow	12 (10.81%)
Divorced	1 (0.90%)

It is clear from the above table that majority of the respondents are married.

#### (c) Mean age at marriage :

Between 15-19 years	2 (2.67%)
Between 20-24 years	47 (62.67%)
Between 25-29 years	21 (28.00%)
Between 30-34 years	5 (6.66%)

The above figures indicate that age at marriage is the highest in the age group 20-24 years.

#### (d) Education :

Illiterate	95 (85.59%)
Just literate	2 (1.80%)
Having school education	14 (14.41%)



The above figures indicate that about 86 per cent of women are illiterate but 14.41 per cent having school education can be trained to take the leadership for the rest. Below the age group 29 years not a single woman is even found to be just literate. Adult education may prove fruitful to this group of women.

**(e) Economic Activities :**

Cultivation	52 (57.77%)
Shifting cultivation	83 (92.92%)
Agricultural wage earning	25 (27.77%)
Non-agricultural wage earning	0 (0.00%)
Forest collection	72 (80.00%)
Service	0 (0.00%)

**Average Annual per-capita Income :**

Cultivation	Rs. 200
Shifting cultivation	Rs. 1,260
Agricultural wage earning	Rs. 150
Forest collection	Rs. 1,000
Per capita annual income	Rs. 1,718.28

Out of 111 sample women, 90 women (81.08%) who belong to the age group 15-59 years constitute the work force. Their work participation in different economic sectors shown above reveals that they are exclusively engaged in primary sector of economy i.e. cultivation, shifting cultivation, agricultural wage earning and forest collection. Not a single woman is found employed in any secondary or tertiary sector. During the course of interaction with the respondents it is found that shifting cultivation is a part and parcel of their life and they have no confidence in their ability to take up non-traditional work. Heavy pressure on land leads to under-employment and low per capita income. Degradation and reservation for forest also act as a set-back on their economy, as next to agriculture they get their subsistence from forest. It is also found during the study that forest collections are mainly marketed by the women at the Gumma weekly market. They are found exploited by the local traders.

The extent of influence of women on their husbands in decision making is shown below :-

Decision Areas	Mean Score	Rank
Marriage of children	3.98	III
Education of children	3.53	IV
Expenditure Pattern	4.91	I
Construction of House	3.04	V
Adoption of new shifting Land.	3.98	III
Debt & payment of loans	2.85	III
Health and Hygiene care	2.75	IX
Religious matters	2.95	VII
family planning	3.01	VI
Household task	4.52	II
Dowry payment	1.98	X
Litigation matter	1.01	XI

The Saora women have influence more or less on their husbands on above items. They exercise their influence on three most important areas i.e. expenditure pattern, marriage of children and adoption of new agricultural lands. This finding will be helpful to the extension workers in field of agriculture to motivate women as expenditure pattern and adoption of new farm innovations are the two most important areas for the economy of the family.

Sources of information utilised by the Saora women :

Information sources	Mean score	Rank
Radio	3.01	VII
V.L.W.	3.95	V
Anganwadi	4.01	IV
Family	8.25	I
Friends & relatives	7.01	II
Tribal Development Agency	3.02	VI
Village leaders	6.82	III

The above figures reveal the intensity of the use of different information sources by the Saora women. The three most important

information sources utilised by women are family, friends and relatives and village leaders. Among the institutionalised sources, Anganwadi comes first followed by V.L.W., Tribal Development Agency and Radio. No doubt, the above finding is real in the sense that family, village leader and peers are very close to them. On the other hand, the institutional sources have some bottlenecks in rearing and educating them. However, to maintain high degree of fidelity in communication more information support should be provided to Saora women by the institutional agencies.

#### CONCLUSION:

The study illustrates an alround socio-economic status and living pattern of Lanjia Saora women. On the whole, women in the Lanjia Saora society occupy a dignified position enjoying considerable freedom in social life. They do not have the feeling that they are inferior to men. They do not face evils, like adultery, rape, beating, bride burning etc. neither they feel insecure in their in-laws house. The Lanjia Saora women share the duties and responsibilities of maintaining the daily life of their families on equal terms with the men folk.

On the other hand, the economic scenario of Saora women continues to be significantly dominated by agriculture, terraced cultivation and its allied activities. Saora women in particular constitute a laborious bulk who were found to have enormous potentiality without proper avenue for its utilization. Moreover, the Saora women are quite responsive and have

influence on their husbands. It is a positive sign which the developmental agencies can explore to fortify their efforts to secure acceptance of the programmes by the tribal families.

Lastly, the Lanjia Saora women are in that stage of development which is primarily growth-oriented economic development. The first and foremost need is economic development which should then be followed by development of inter-relation between economic development and social change.

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**THE STATEMENT ABOUT OWNERSHIP AND PARTICULARS ABOUT  
THE NEWSPAPER ENTITLED ADIVASI AS REQUIRED TO BE  
PUBLISHED UNDER RULE 8 OF THE REGISTRATION OF NEWSPAPER  
(CENTRAL) RULE, 1956**

**FORM IV**

Place of publication	..	Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute, Bhubaneswar-3, District-Khurda.
Periodicity of the publications	..	Half-yearly
Printer's name	..	Director, Printing, Stationery and Publication, Orissa, Cuttack.
Nationality	..	Indian
Address	..	Madhupatna, Cuttack-10
Publisher's name	..	Director of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and training Institute, Government of Orissa.
Nationality	..	Indian
Address	..	Bhubaneswar-3
Editor's name	..	Professor K. K. Mohanti, Director, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute, Bhubaneswar-751003.
Nationality	..	Indian
Address	..	Bhubaneswar, Orissa (India) Pin-751003.